



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Policies and Procedures: Child Welfare Services

Subject:	Missing or Abducted Children Response
Authority:	42 USC 671(a)(9)(C)(i)(I) and 42 USC 671(a)(34) and (35), S.C. Code § 63-19-2220, and The Interstate Commission for Juveniles Interstate Compact for Juveniles
Standards:	Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model
Application:	All Child Welfare Services Staff
Purpose:	To establish guidelines for the initial and ongoing response to and the recovery of children who are reported missing or abducted during an investigation, family preservation, or foster care case.
Policy Statement:	DSS shall report immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours, information on missing or abducted children to local law enforcement agencies for entry into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The missing or abducted children who must be reported to local law enforcement agencies and the NCMEC in accordance with this policy are: 1. Children who are in foster care; 2. Children receiving investigation, foster care, family preservation, adoption, or adoption preservation services whom the Department has reasonable cause to believe are, or are at risk of being a trafficking victim (refer to DSS Policy 1600: Recognizing and Serving Child Trafficking Victims); and 3. Young Adults aged 18-21 who are receiving Transition Services and Support (TSS). DSS must maintain regular communication with local law enforcement agencies and the NCMEC in efforts to provide a safe recovery of the missing or abducted child described in this policy, including sharing information pertaining to the child's recovery or circumstances related to the recovery. Initial and ongoing reports to law enforcement agencies and the NCMEC must include, where reasonably possible: 1. A photo of the missing or abducted child; 2. A description of the child's physical features, such as height, weight, sex, ethnicity, race, hair color, and eye color; and 3. Endangerment information, such as the child's pregnancy status, prescription medications, suicidal tendencies, vulnerability to being trafficked, and other medical or mental health or risk factors.

Subject: Missing or Abducted Children Response

Policy Administration:

The Child Welfare Services Operations and Safety Divisions are the owners of this policy. The Directors, or the Directors' designee, shall review this policy at least annually from the date published in the Child Welfare Manual, or as needed due to changes in law or practice.

Policy Guidelines:

A. Initial Response of Missing or Abducted Children	A case manager who becomes aware a child referenced in the above policy statement is missing or has been abducted must immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours, report this information as outlined below: 1. Report information on the missing or abducted child to the law enforcement agency in the county of origin and the last place of residence for entry into the NCIC and NCMEC databases. Where reasonably possibly, the case manager shall also include: a. A photo of the missing or abducted child; b. A description of the child's physical features such as height, weight, sex, ethnicity, race, hair color, and eye color; and c. Endangerment information such as the child's pregnancy status, prescription medications, suicidal tendencies, vulnerability to being sex trafficked, and other medical or mental health and risk factors. 2. If not provided with the NCIC number at the time of the report, the case manager shall: a. Contact law enforcement and request the NCIC number for the child's records and a copy of the incident report or incident referral number; b. Document the name of the law enforcement contact, the jurisdiction, date, time, and contact information during each follow-up contact; and c. If the county is unable to effectively communicate with or receive any information from local law enforcement, contact the DSS Office of Inspector General (OIG) for further assistance in coordinating with law enforcement authorities. 3. Contact NCMEC at 1-800-843-5678 for official case intake or through their website at missingkids.org utilizing DSS Form 1356: Guide for Reporting to NCMEC for additional guidance and information that is helpful to law enforcement and NCMEC when reporting a missing or abducted child. • The case manager shall sign the release and verification form for the NCMEC and indicate their job title on the form and that the signer is executing the release on behalf of DSS, the child's custodian.
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Subject: Missing or Abducted Children Response

	4. The case manager shall notify and interview the caregiver(s) to determine primary factors that possibly contributed to the child's absence from care. The case manager shall document the interview within CAPSS dictation and on DSS Form 30233. This form shall be uploaded to CAPSS linked files. 5. The case manager shall complete DSS Form 30233 including the NCIC number and submit it to the County Director who will submit the form to criticalincidentreports@dss.sc.gov. 6. The case manager submits DSS Form 37168 for the placement tab to be updated to reflect the child is missing or abducted, utilizing the applicable email address below: a. ContractTeamUpstate@dss.sc.gov b. ContractTeamMidlands@dss.sc.gov c. ContractTeamPeeDee@dss.sc.gov d. ContractTeamLowCountry@dss.sc.gov 7. The case manager shall refer to DSS Policy 510.2.3: Temporary Placements for additional information on how temporary events are documented. 8. The case manager must notify the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the child has been reported missing or abducted and document the contact in CAPSS dictation. 9. The case manager must notify the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) the child has been reported missing or abducted and document the contact in CAPSS dictation. 10. In addition to reporting to law enforcement authorities and the NCMEC as outlined in this policy, the case manager shall report any missing or abducted child who is a sex or labor trafficking victim or whom the case manager has reasonable cause to believe is at risk of being a sex or labor trafficking victim to childtrafficking@dss.sc.gov. (Note: Refer to Policy 1600: Recognizing and Serving Child Trafficking Victims for additional practice guidance).
B. Ongoing Case Contacts	1. The case manager shall, at a minimum, on a weekly basis: a. Make concerted efforts to locate the child by social media posts, phone, or in-person visits to previous foster care placements, caregivers, relatives of the child, known associates, and friends; b. Explore possible leads on the child's whereabouts; c. Conduct follow-up contact with law enforcement and NCMEC by email, phone call, or in-person to share and receive information regarding the missing or abducted child and assist in efforts with locating the child; and

Subject: Missing or Abducted Children Response

	d. Document all contacts and efforts to locate the child in CAPSS dictation and link related documents in CAPSS linked files within three business days of the occurrence. Note: Reference Policy 1649: Concerted Efforts – Locating and Engaging Families for additional practice guidance. 2. The case manager shall respond and assist law enforcement and NCMEC in contacting the child when newly gathered information is collected that could lead to the child being located. 3. DSS will only seek to obtain a Family Court pick-up order for a child who is missing from care and if doing so is necessary to serve the child's best interests. In such cases, the case manager will consult with their legal department utilizing DSS Form 1550: Juvenile Pickup Order CIS Template to prepare for the case consultation. • Upon receipt of a signed pick-up order from a judge, if applicable, the case manager shall supply the order to law enforcement authorities. 4. The case manager shall consult with the State Office Title IV-E Coordinator if the child's missing or abducted status continues for 30 days or longer. 5. Ongoing reporting to law enforcement agencies and NCMEC on any missing or abducted child affected by this policy continues until a child is recovered, or the child attains age 18 and has not signed Voluntary Services and Support Agreement (VSSA), whichever event occurs first. Additionally, if DSS verifies a missing or abducted child is deceased, the service line may close.
C. Recovery of a Child	Unless otherwise instructed by law enforcement for a compelling reason, within 24 hours upon the child returning from being missing or abducted, the case manager shall: 1. Only seek to obtain a Family Court pick-up order for a missing child from care if doing so is necessary to serve the child's best interests by utilizing DSS Form 1550: Juvenile Pickup Order CIS Template to prepare for the legal case consultation; 2. Notify law enforcement and share information surrounding the child's recovery; 3. Notify the NCMEC and share information surrounding the child's recovery and circumstances related to the recovery to include the following: a. Any related documents, medical records, referral status, and other information requested by law enforcement unless otherwise restricted from doing so by court order or other compelling circumstances; and b. The circumstances surrounding the recovery on DSS Form 30233 (Note: The circumstances surrounding the recovery

	will be documented, uploaded to CAPSS, and shared with law enforcement upon request on DSS Form 30233.) 4. Request a facilitator led Placement CFTM (P-CFTM) to address concerns about placement options for the child (Note: Refer to Policy 1642: Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM's) for additional practice guidance). 5. Advocate to the placement team that the child is placed in a setting that addresses or remedies the issues that led to the child's missing or abducted status, consulting the information for the caregiver interview on DSS Form 30233; 6. Update DSS Form 30233 and refer to Policy 1600: Recognizing and Serving Child Trafficking Victims; 7. The case manager shall submit DSS Form 37168: Placement Change for the placement tab to be updated to reflect the child is missing or abducted, utilizing the applicable email address below: a. ContractTeamUpstate@dss.sc.gov b. ContractTeamMidlands@dss.sc.gov c. ContractTeamPeeDee@dss.sc.gov d. ContractTeamLowCounty@dss.sc.gov 8. Determine the child's experiences while absent from care including screening the child to determine if the child is a possible sex or labor trafficking victim utilizing DSS Form 1544: Child Trafficking Screening Tool; 9. Take the child to receive a medical exam and make a referral to the local Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) for a forensic interview and forensic medical exam, if needed; 10. Update the child's person screen in CAPSS to reflect any new information and upload a copy of all documents that were placed into the child's CAPSS Case ID; 11. Notify the family by telephone; and 12. Notify the child's Guardian ad Litem (GAL) or Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).
D. Recovery of a Child Out of State	1. The case manager shall contact the Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) Coordinator at the State DJJ agency to coordinate the recovery of the child out of state. 2. If one of the following pertains to a missing or abducted child, ICJ can be used as a resource to return children who: a. Are on probation, parole, other supervision, or have escaped to another state; b. Have run away from home and left their state of residence; or c. Have been accused of an offense in another state.

Subject: Missing or Abducted Children Response

Forms:	DSS Form 1356 Guide for Reporting to NCMEC DSS Form 1546: Missing Child Guide for Families Resource DSS Form 1550: Juvenile Pickup Order CIS Template DSS Form 30233: Missing or Abducted Child Critical Incident Report DSS Form 37168: Placement Change
Related Management Reports:	N/A

Glossary:
Critical Incident: an incident resulting in the imminent risk of suffering of serious bodily or emotional injury of a child known to DSS Guardian Ad Litem (GAL): appointed, in the family court, to represent children in con-tested custody and visitation cases, adoptions, DSS abuse and neglect cases, paternity actions, involuntary commitments, and termination of parental rights cases, and investi-gate matters that might not be brought before the court by the attorneys representing the parties Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ): the agreement pertaining to the legally author-ized transfer of supervision and care, as well as the return of juveniles from one state to another, which has been adopted by all member states that have enacted legislation in substantially the same language, and does not include or provide for the transfer of court jurisdiction from one state to another Labor Trafficking: includes 1) forced labor: any type of labor or services performed or provided by a person rendered through another person's coercion of the person providing the labor or services; 2) involuntary servitude: a condition of servitude induced through coercion; or 3) debt bondage: the status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge of his personal services or those of a person under his control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined or if the principal amount of the debt does not reasonably reflect the value of the items or services for which the debt was incurred. Sex Trafficking: means the soliciting, transporting, patronizing, providing, enticing, recruiting, harboring, or transporting of a person into a commercial sex act for the benefit of another person. For youth under the age of 18, force, fraud, coercion, or inclusion of a third party are not required. No youth under the age of 18 can consent to commercial sex.