

POLICY V-E: CHILD INVOLVED IN PROTECTIVE SERVICES CASE WHO IS MISSING

05/2017

Occasionally there are instances when a child or youth involved in an open protective services case may runaway or otherwise go missing. In all instances of missing children who are part of an open protective services case, the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will collaborate with the child's family, law enforcement, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in an effort to locate the child.

Child Who May Have Been Taken Without Authorization or the Family has Absconded with the Child(ren)

If the family and/or Division has reason to believe the child was taken from his/her parents/caretakers without authorization by another individual, then upon notification, the family's FSW caseworker and FSW caseworker's supervisor will ensure the following individuals are notified of the child's disappearance:

- A. Area Director
- B. Assistant Director of Community Services or designee

The Assistant Director of Community Services or designee will then notify the DCFS Director.

The FSW caseworker will also issue a Protective Services Alert if:

- A. The family has left the county of origin and moved with their child(ren) to another county or state; and,
- B. The new address is unknown; and,
- C. The child's health or physical well-being is deemed to be in immediate danger because the family is involved in an open protective services case involving an identified Arkansas Health and Safety Factor.

Child Who May Have Run Away

If the family and/or Division has reason to believe the child independently left his/her home of his/her own accord (i.e., run away), then upon notification, the family's FSW caseworker and FSW caseworker's supervisor will ensure the Area Director is also notified of the child's disappearance. The FSW caseworker will then follow the steps outlined below.

Procedure V-E1: When a Child is Reported Missing from a Family with an Open Protective Services Case

05/2017

The following applies to situations in which the child has been taken from his/her parents/caretakers without authorization and to situations in which the child has run away independently from the home.

After receiving notification of the child's disappearance from the child's family or by other means, the FSW caseworker will:

- A. Notify the child's attorney ad litem (if applicable) within two hours.
 - 1) This notification may occur via email, phone, or text.
- B. Determine within two hours whether the child's parents/caretakers have filed a missing person report with the local police department or sheriff's office.
 - 1) If the parents/caretakers have filed a missing person report, obtain the missing report number from the parents/caretakers.
 - 2) If the parents/caretakers have not yet filed a missing person report, encourage the parents to file the report with the local police department or sheriff's department as soon as possible and obtain the missing person report number from the parents/caretakers as soon as possible.
 - 3) If the parents/caretakers refuse to file a missing person report within one business day, contact the local police department or sheriff's department immediately to file a missing person report and provide the following information:

- a) Child's name;
 - b) A physical description of the child;
 - c) A picture of the child may be released to assist with identification provided that the child is not identified as being involved in an open protective services case.
 - d) Child's date of birth;
 - e) Circumstances of the missing child's disappearance, including the date the child went missing or was last seen and if the child indicated a destination (and, if so, what the destination is);
 - f) Any other factual, biographical, or historical information that may assist with locating the missing child;
 - g) A request for law enforcement to enter the information into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
 - i. If the local police department or sheriff's department will not allow DCFS to file a missing person report on behalf of the family, document the attempt to file the missing person report in CHRIS contacts.
- C. Once a police report has been filed, contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) no later than 24 hours after receiving information on missing or abducted children or youth to provide the following information to NCMEC per the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DCFS and NCMEC:
 - 1) Child's name;
 - 2) Photo of the child, if available;
 - 3) Child's date of birth;
 - 4) Name and contact information of the FSW caseworker and FSW supervisor;
 - 5) Investigating Law Enforcement Agency Name, Contact Information, and Case Number (i.e., Missing Person Report number);
 - 6) Circumstances of the missing child's disappearance, including the date the child went missing or was last seen;
 - 7) Any other factual, biographical, or historical information that may assist with locating the missing Child.
- E. Upon NCMEC's request, release to NCMEC any additional requested information and/or records in its possession that are relevant to locating the missing child.
- F. Keep NCMEC informed with up-to-date information regarding the missing child.
- G. Update CHRIS contacts regarding the missing child and efforts to locate the missing child.
- H. If the child:
 - 1) Is not found and there are other children in the home:
 - a) Continue to provide services to the family and other children as appropriate; and,
 - b) Continue to call previously contacted parties and inquire for information and furnish further information that becomes available through case closure.
 - c) If appropriate, extend the search to other counties and states.
 - 2) Is not found within 60 calendar days and is the only child in the home:
 - a) Update the FAST to determine if additional services (e.g., counseling may be appropriate for the parents/caretakers);
 - b) Close the case if the family does not need further services.

After notification of the child's disappearance by the family or by other means, the FSW supervisor will:

- A. Notify the Area Director and Assistant Director of Community Services or designee of the child's disappearance.
- B. Conference with the FSW as needed.

Procedure V-E2: When a Child Involved in a Protective Services Case Who has been Missing is Located

05/2017

When a child involved in an open protective service case who has been missing is located, the FSW caseworker will:

- A. Encourage the parents to have the child examined by his/her primary care physician, if possible, within 72 hours of locating the child or immediately in the case of a medical emergency.
- B. Notify immediately (but no later than 24 hours after the child has been located) all parties and individuals previously notified of the child's disappearance that the child has been located to include, but not limited to:
 - 1) FSW Supervisor
 - 2) Area Director
 - 3) Local OCC attorney
 - 4) Child's attorney ad litem, if applicable
 - 5) Law enforcement
 - 6) NCMEC
 - a) This notification may occur via email, phone, or text as appropriate.
- C. If the case:
 - 1) Was not closed during the child's absence from the home:
 - a) Conduct a visit with the child and the child's family within three business days after the child has been located to determine what immediate needs the child and/or family may have and what immediate steps may need to be taken to better support the child and his/her family.
 - b) Update CHRIS contacts to note the child has been located and when the FSW caseworker met with the child and his/her family.
 - c) Determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise being absent from his/her home to include:
 - i. Updating the family's FAST assessment within 30 days of locating the child; and,
 - ii. Determining if the child is a sex trafficking victim or at risk of being a sex trafficking victim based on responses to the updated FAST and any other information gathered.
 - 1) If there is reason to believe the child is a victim of sex trafficking:
 - (a) Document accordingly in CHRIS and conference with the FSW supervisor to determine appropriate next steps for additional screening related to sex trafficking victims and/or referral to appropriate services.
 - (b) Report information on children or youth who have been identified as a sex trafficking victim to local law enforcement immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours after receiving the information.
 - (c) Document in CHRIS contacts when local law enforcement is notified of a child being identified as a sex trafficking victim.
 - 2) Was closed because the child was the only child involved in the case and absent from the home for more than 60 days and the family did not require further services:
 - a) Reopen the case if the child is still under 18 years of age.
 - b) Determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise being absent from his/her home to include:
 - i. Updating the family's FAST assessment within 30 days of reopening the case; and,
 - ii. Determining if the child is a sex trafficking victim or at risk of being a sex trafficking victim based on responses to the updated FAST and any other information gathered.

- 1) If there is reason to believe the child is a victim of sex trafficking:
 - (a) Document accordingly in CHRIS and conference with the FSW supervisor to determine appropriate next steps for additional screening related to sex trafficking victims and/or referral to appropriate services.
 - (b) Report information on children or youth who have been identified as a sex trafficking victim to local law enforcement immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours after receiving the information.
 - (c) Document in CHRIS contacts when local law enforcement is notified of a child being identified as sex trafficking victim.

The FSW supervisor(s) will:

- A. Conference with the FSW(s) as needed.
- B. Notify the Assistant Director of Community Services or designee.