Missing Children/Runaways

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

Policy: 700.0135

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It is the policy of the Department to ensure that the proper authorities are notified when a child in the care of the Department or its providers is missing. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the child's health and safety by making every possible effort to locate the missing child.

All missing children/runaways from DCYF foster/relative/institutional care must be reported within specified time frames to the local police department of the specific city or town from which the child is missing. The primary service worker or the Call Floor (after hours, weekends and holidays) must also be notified immediately following the notification to the police department. If the child is located, the police department must be notified of the child's return. The primary service worker or Call Floor worker must also be notified of the child's return.

Immediately upon notification of a report of a missing child, the local police department enters information into its computer and forwards the paperwork to the Missing Children's Information Center of the Rhode Island State Police Department. The Missing Children's Information Center is charged with the responsibility of coordinating, filing, collecting, and maintaining data on all reported missing children cases in the state. This information is coordinated with information from other states in investigating cases of missing children and unidentified bodies. The Center is also charged with responsibility for promptly investigating all missing children cases in the state.

In order to protect the missing child and ensure his/her safety, the following procedures are to be followed when a child is missing or runs from DCYF or a DCYF provider. Particular protocols exist when there is a runaway with a special medical condition.

Related Procedure

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Procedure From Policy 700.0135: Missing Children/Runaways

A. When a child is missing from placement, regardless of circumstances, the DCYF provider must notify the local police department and DCYF. If the child is missing or runs from a DCYF Office, the assigned primary service worker/Child Protective Investigator must notify the police department:

1. The police department is notified within the following time frames. (The child's level of maturity, mental status, and past patterns of behavior must be considered as circumstances which may require earlier reporting to ensure the child's safety.):
   a. A child under the age of six (6) years must be reported missing immediately;
   b. A child between the ages of six (6) and twelve (12) years must be reported missing if he/she does not return within one (l) hour of the expected time of return; and
   c. A child over the age of twelve (12) years must be reported missing if he/she does not return within two (2) hours of the expected time of return.
2. The police will obtain the report in person. The reporter must be prepared to provide the police department with the following information:
   a. Name of child;
   b. Race;
   c. Sex;
   d. Date of birth;
   e. Health and weight;
   f. Eye and hair color;
   g. Eye glasses or contact lenses;
   h. Miscellaneous information which may be important (i.e. what child was wearing when last seen, names of child's friends, possible destination of child);
   i. Reporting agency's (i.e. group home, foster home, etc.), address, phone number; and
   j. The person calling the police should sign the Missing Person Report (if this is not possible, another staff worker/foster parent may sign the report).
3. The reporter notifies the primary service worker (during standard agency work hours) or the Call Floor after hours (Monday through Friday, 4:00 P.M. to 8:30 A.M., weekends, and holidays) of the report immediately following the call to the police department.
4. The primary service worker notifies the child's parent(s) of the runaway status and return as each event occurs.
5. The primary service worker updates RICHIST:

a. ~~Runaway status is reflected by entering the child as AWOL in the Placement Window.~~

b. ~~Return from runaway status is reflected by entering the child's placement in the Placement Window.~~

B. ~~If the child is located or returned, the police department which originally obtained the Missing Person Report and the primary service worker (during standard agency work hours) or the Call Floor after hours (Monday through Friday, 4:00 PM to 8:30 AM, weekends, and holidays) must be notified immediately of the child's return:~~

1. ~~If the child returns to the provider which reported the child as missing, the provider contacts the police department and the primary service worker or Call Floor.~~
2. ~~If the child returns to DCYF and is not returning to the placement which reported the child as missing, the assigned primary service worker contacts the local police department to which the child was reported missing.~~
3. ~~If the child returns to DCYF after hours (Monday through Friday, 4:00 PM to 8:30 AM, weekends, and holidays) and is not returning to the placement which reported the child as missing, the Call Floor must contact the local police department to which the child was reported missing.~~

C. ~~DCYF staff may obtain information on a missing child from the Missing Children's Information Center by contacting the State Police Department.~~

D. ~~Every attempt~~ shall ~~be made by DCYF staff to locate a missing child if the child's whereabouts is known or suspected:~~

1. ~~The assigned primary service worker shall make every attempt to locate a child if information of the child's whereabouts is received.~~
2. ~~If information of a child's whereabouts is received after hours (4:00 PM to 8:30 AM , weekends, and holidays), CPS staff will make every attempt to locate the child.~~