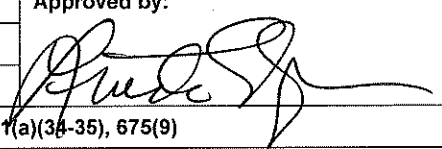


DCF	COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS ~ DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES	
	Policy Name: Children who are Missing or Absent	
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CHILDREN WHO ARE MISSING OR ABSENT

NOTE: Throughout this document, the terms "child" and "children" are used as general and inclusive terms to mean child(ren)/youth/young adult(s) from birth up to age 23 years, including young adults who receive young adult support payments.

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I. POLICY

The Department of Children and Families ("the Department") is committed to preventing children involved with the Department from becoming missing or absent. Therefore, the Department supports families with children at home, communicates with children about their needs and wants, carefully selects out-of-home placements, and works with placement resources to stabilize children who have been removed from home. The Department believes that promoting positive relationships with family and peers, promoting educational stability and success, and supporting normal childhood experiences are positive steps that help to prevent children from becoming missing or absent.

When a child is missing or absent, the Department has procedures for Department staff, placement resources, children's families and contracted residential and foster care services programs to follow. Involved parties must notify authorities and mobilize resources within specific time frames, collaborate to perform a thorough search until the child is located, and follow guidelines for returning the child to their family or Department approved placement.

II. PROCEDURES

A. DEFINITIONS AND TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY

Abducted – it is known or believed that the child has been seized or taken away by persuasion, fraud, or force, without permission from the parent(s)/caregiver(s), or from the Department for children in Department Care or Custody. *(NOTE: The abductor may be the child's parent or caregiver, a "pimp" or other unknown or known person who is controlling or exploiting the child.)*

Absent – a child who has left (or run away from) a Department-approved placement or their parent(s)/caregiver(s), whose whereabouts are KNOWN and refuses to return.

Custodial interference – is the wrongful taking of a child from a lawful custodian with the intent to interfere with the physical custody of the child.

Immediate danger – any child who is missing or absent and who:

- has been or is believed to have been abducted; **OR**
- is age 13 or younger; **OR**
- is a **current** victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking; **OR**
- is of any age and is believed to pose **immediate danger** to self or others (see Appendix B).

Human trafficking victim – a person who is subjected to harboring, recruitment, enticement, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting for the purpose of:

- **sex trafficking** (e.g., performance of a commercial sex act, inducement to perform a commercial sex act, forced sexual services and/or sexually explicit performance); and/or
- **labor trafficking** (e.g., subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery).

Missing – a child whose whereabouts are UNKNOWN. Includes:

- a child who may have been abducted;
- a child who may have run away or be "on the run" whose whereabouts are unknown, whether or not they make periodic contact with the Department, the placement resource, parent(s)/caregiver(s), or custodian; or
- a child who has come under Department jurisdiction on an emergency basis under MGL c.119, §51B(c), and the child's whereabouts become unknown before the initial court hearing

NCIC (National Crime Information Center) – a computerized index of criminal justice information available to federal, state, and local law enforcement authorities and other criminal justice agencies. The purpose of the NCIC is to provide quick information to agencies that help to locate fugitives, locate missing persons, and locate and return stolen property.

NCMEC (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children) – an organization that helps prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation, helps locate children who are missing, and assists the victims of child abduction and sexual exploitation, their families, and the professionals helping them.

Orders of custodial protection – orders issued by a court under the Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) statute that provide police with authority to take a child under age 18 years who has run away into protective custody.

Parent(s)/caregiver(s) - as used in this policy parent(s)/caregiver(s) refers to the legal parent of the child, a person who has been authorized by the parent to temporarily care for the child in the parent's absence, or a person who has been given custody of a child through an order of a court of competent jurisdiction.

Placement resource – the contracted provider of residential services or comprehensive foster care services, or a Department kinship, foster/pre-adoptive, or child-specific family resource.

Sexually exploited – any person under age 21 years who:

- engages in, agrees to engage in, or offers to engage in, sexual conduct with another person in exchange for a fee or something of value or in exchange for food, shelter, clothing, education, or care; or
- as the term is defined in M.G.L.c119 §21.

See also **Appendix A - Relevant Terms and Acronyms**.

B. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s)** is responsible for:
 - engaging in child-specific activities to prevent a child from becoming missing or absent;
 - notifying local law enforcement (obtain a NCIC number) and the Department, as applicable, when a child becomes missing or absent;
 - engaging in efforts to search for a child who is missing or verifying the location of a child who is absent;
 - communicating with law enforcement and others about the child who is missing or absent; and
 - supporting efforts to return the child to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s).
- **Social Worker** assigned to the child is responsible for:
 - supporting and engaging in child-specific prevention planning;
 - supporting and engaging in activities to search for a child who is missing or to verify the location of a child who is absent;
 - ensuring notifications take place when a child is missing, including notification of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; and
 - supporting and engaging in activities to return the child to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s).
- **Supervisor** is responsible for supporting the Social Worker in activities related to:
 - child-specific prevention planning;
 - ensuring notifications occur within required timeframes;
 - identifying activities to search for a child who is missing or to verify the location of a child who is absent;
 - returning the child to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s); and
 - ensuring required tasks are completed in the Social Worker's absence.
- **Area Program Manager (APM)** assigned for case management of the child who is missing or absent, or another manager designated by the Area Director is responsible for:
 - coordinating and monitoring activities to locate and/or return a child who is missing or absent to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s); and
 - arranging for a clinical review team for a child who has been missing or absent for 7 calendar days to occur within 14 calendar days of their becoming missing or absent.

- **Area Director** is responsible for:
 - coordinating and monitoring activities related to children who are missing or absent;
 - tracking efforts to return a child who is missing or absent to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s);
 - assisting the On Call Supervisor during non-working hours when a child is missing and in immediate danger; and
 - convening a child-specific planning meeting for children with more than two episodes of being missing or absent within 60 calendar days.
- **Hotline On Call Supervisor (OCS).** When the hotline receives a report that a child is missing or absent, the OCS is responsible for:
 - coordinating and supporting activities to locate and return the child to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s) during non-working hours;
 - notifying the Area Director where the child's case is assigned of any report involving a child who is missing and in immediate danger; and
 - ensuring notifications take place when a child is missing, including notification of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children within the required 24-hour time frame.

C. PROCEDURES: PREVENTING CHILDREN FROM BECOMING MISSING OR ABSENT

Engage Family and Others in Assessment and Action Planning to Prevent Children Becoming Missing or Absent

1. To prevent children from becoming missing or absent from home or placement, the child's parent(s)/caregiver(s) and clinical team consider the following factors throughout the family's involvement, including before, at the time of, and during any placement:
 - **Supporting the child's relationship and engagement with the parent(s)/caregiver(s) and with the placement resource, when applicable** – The Social Worker promotes the child's engagement by:
 - establishing a trusting relationship with the child;
 - visiting the child regularly and having individual time to listen to the child's concerns and understand the child's needs and wants;
 - visiting the child's parent(s)/caregiver(s) regularly to discuss the child's progress, including what might be done to support or improve the parent(s)/caregiver(s)-child relationship;
 - providing information to the child in advance of any placement, when possible, as appropriate to their age and development, including:
 - the reasons for placement and what needs to change for the child to return home;
 - the date, time, expected length of placement, and what to bring;
 - details of how contact with the parent(s)/caregiver(s), siblings, grandparents, and significant others will be maintained; and
 - a description of the placement resource and a pre-placement visit when possible; and
 - visiting the placement resource regularly to discuss the child's progress, including what might be done to support or improve the child's engagement.
 - **Supporting normal childhood experiences (e.g. field trips, overnight visits, day trips with friends and family), interests, and activities typical for the child's age and development, including when placement is needed** – The Social Worker supports the child by:
 - speaking with the child and parent(s)/caregiver(s) to gather information about the child's:

- current interests/activities/hobbies/organizational memberships and how participation may be continued; and
 - usual household routines, rules, and expectations and how these might need to be addressed.
- sharing known information with the placement resource about the child's interests/activities/hobbies/ organizational memberships and developing a plan for continued participation; and
- developing a shared understanding of the placement resource's routines, rules, and expectations, and helping to negotiate changes to support normalcy for the child.
- **Specific child or family vulnerabilities** – The Social Worker, in consultation with the Supervisor:
 - uses what is known about the child's history and/or behavior (e.g., prior runaway incidents, leaving home, substance use/misuse, sexual exploitation, recent traumatic event(s), rejecting home/placement/school environment for LGBTQ youth, gang involvement, court involvement, or delinquent behavior) to inform preventive Action Plan tasks/services/supports for the child, parent(s)/caregiver(s), placement resource, and/or others (such as a mentor, therapist, or kin collateral); and/or
 - incorporates prevention planning into the Action Plan when there is known family history or behavior that could contribute to a child's becoming missing, absent, or abducted.
- **Continuity when placement is needed** – The clinical team considers placing the child:
 - in the same setting as siblings and/or with an adult sibling or other kin, or with a child-specific resource (see Permanency Planning Policy and Sibling Bill of Rights); and/or
 - in a setting that provides proximity to family, peers, and community; and
 - in a setting that provides cultural continuity and matches the child's linguistic and cultural needs.
- **Educational stability and success of child who is entering or changing placement** – For a school-age child, the Social Worker consults with the Local Education Agency and school of origin to make an educational best interest determination that considers:
 - how the child may be maintained in the same school; and
 - other factors that may contribute to the child's educational attainment and success. (See Education Policy for Children Birth through 22)

D. PROCEDURES: DETERMINING WHETHER CHILD IS MISSING OR ABSENT AND ASSESSING IMMEDIATE DANGER

Determine Whether Child is Missing or Absent

1. When a child is not where expected, the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) determines whether the child is:
 - **MISSING**, i.e., whereabouts unknown; **or**
 - **ABSENT**, i.e., whereabouts known.

Assess Immediate Danger

2. The placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) determines whether the child who is missing or absent **is in immediate danger**. The child is considered to be in immediate danger if the child:
 - has been, or is believed to have been, abducted; **OR**

- is age 13 or younger; **OR**
- is a **current** victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking; **OR**
- is of any age and is believed to pose **immediate danger** to self or others based on consideration of the factors in **Appendix B**.

File a 51A Report, if needed

3. If any person has reason to believe that the child has been abused or neglected, a 51A is filed. The reporter may be a mandated reporter or any other person with knowledge of the situation.

E. PROCEDURES: CHILD IS MISSING

Ensure Timely Reporting to Law Enforcement and the Department

1. a) **For a child who is missing and determined to be in *immediate danger*, the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) immediately:**
 - initiates search activities; (See **Appendix D – Search Activities When a Child is Missing**)
 - files an immediate report with local law enforcement (see **Appendix C** for the information to provide when reporting a child missing);
 - obtains a NCIC number or other law enforcement case reference number; and
 - contacts the Department and provides the police contact information and NCIC number. **The placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) must make personal contact with a member of Department staff during working hours or the hotline during non-working hours; a voicemail alone is not acceptable.**
- b) **For a child who is missing and determined to be in immediate danger, the Social Worker:**
 - talks with the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) about efforts to locate the child;
 - if the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) cannot or will not file a report with local law enforcement, files an immediate report with local law enforcement if the child is in the Department's care or custody, or if the child is in the parent's custody and is, or is believed to be at risk of being, a victim of human trafficking or sexual exploitation;
 - if the child is in the parent(s)/caregiver(s)'s care or custody, and is not, or is not believed to be at risk of being, a victim of human trafficking or sexual exploitation and the parent/caregiver cannot or will not file a report with the local law enforcement, consults with the Supervisor and if needed the Area Program Manager to determine if a 51A should be filed;
 - if the child is in Department care/custody, assists the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) in searching for the child; and
 - documents information in the electronic case record.

During non-working hours, the OCS follows the same procedures and also notifies the Area Director about the child who is missing and in immediate danger.

NOTE: The local law enforcement authority may issue a **Be On the Look Out (BOLO)** bulletin or activate an **Endangered Child Advisory**. Only the State Police are able to issue an **AMBER Alert**, which is requested through the local law enforcement authority. (See Appendix A)

- c) **For a child who is missing and determined *not to be in immediate danger*, the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s):**

- immediately initiates search activities; (See **Appendix D – Search Activities When a Child is Missing**)
- files a report with local law enforcement no later than 4 hours from the time the child was identified as missing (if still missing). (See **Appendix C** for the information to provide when reporting a child who is missing.);
- obtains a NCIC number or other law enforcement case reference number;
- contacts the Department during working hours or the hotline during non-working hours, no later than 4 hours from the time the child became missing (if still missing). The placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) provides the police contact information and NCIC number; and
- if the child returns within 4 hours, the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) notifies the Social Worker by the start of the next working day.

d) For a child who is missing and determined not to be in immediate danger, the Social Worker:

- talks with the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) about efforts to locate the child;
- if the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) cannot or will not file a report with local law enforcement, files a report no later than 4 hours from the time the child was identified as missing (if still missing) if the child is in the Department's care or custody, or if the child is in the parent's custody and is, or is believed to be at risk of being, a victim of human trafficking or sexual exploitation;
- if the child is in the parent(s)/caregiver(s)'s care or custody, and is not, or is not believed to be at risk of being, a victim of human trafficking or sexual exploitation and the parent/caregiver cannot or will not file a report with the local law enforcement, consults with the Supervisor and if needed the Area Program Manager to determine if a 51A should be filed;
- if the child is in Department care/custody, assists the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) in searching for the child; and
- documents information in the electronic case record

During non-working hours, The OCS follows the same procedures.

Consult AD when Child is Undocumented and NOT in the care or custody of the Department

2. If a child who **is missing, is undocumented and NOT in the care or custody of the Department**, the Social Worker during working hours, or the OCS during non-working hours, **consults with the Area Director before making a report to local law enforcement**. The Area Director determines whether such report might jeopardize the best interests of the child and/or family. Notification to law enforcement must be consistent with sections E.1.b and E.1.d above.

Notify CSEC MDT Coordinator if applicable

3. When a child is identified as **in immediate danger** and a 51A (regardless of screening decision) has ever been filed for human trafficking or sexual exploitation, a manager notifies and engages with the local Children's Advocacy Center's Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator (CSEC MDT Coordinator).

When a child is **not in immediate danger**, a manager notifies the CSEC MDT Coordinator within one working day.

For any child who goes missing during non-working hours, a Manager notifies the CSEC MDT Coordinator within one working day.

**Notify Others
When Child is
Court-Involved**

4. When a child is identified as ***in immediate danger, or a victim of custodial interference***, the Social Worker notifies the Department Attorney and the child's probation officer immediately.

When a child is ***not in immediate danger***, the Social Worker notifies the Department Attorney and the probation officer within one working day.

For any child who goes missing during non-working hours, the Social Worker notifies the assigned Department Attorney and the probation officer within one working day.

**Contact NCMEC
Within 24 Hours**

5. Within 24 hours after a child or youth age 20 years or younger **in Department care or custody is identified as missing**, the Department contacts NCMEC at 1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE-LOST) or through other means established by NCMEC. **If the child is in a parent(s)/caregiver(s)'s care or custody**, either the parent(s)/caregiver(s) or the Department must notify NCMEC within 24 hours if the child is, or is at risk of being, a sex trafficking victim.

**Coordinate an
Information-
Gathering and
Search Plan**

6. The Social Worker, Supervisor, and manager, or the OCS during non-working hours, in consultation with the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s), and where applicable the CSEC MDT Coordinator, plan actions and identify persons responsible for continuing efforts to locate the child. The activities are documented in the electronic case record. (See **Appendix D – Search Activities When a Child is Missing**)

**Update Search Plan
Weekly**

7. The Social Worker and/or Supervisor, in conjunction with the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s), update the search plan at least weekly until the child is located and returns to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s).

**Convene Clinical
Review Team**

8. When a child has been missing for 7 calendar days, the Area Program Manager arranges for a clinical review team **to occur no later than 14 calendar days** after the child was identified as missing. (The APM may choose to schedule the meeting sooner than the seventh day at their discretion.) The purpose of the clinical review team is to support coordination of search activities and/or return of the child. At a minimum, the clinical review team is attended by:
- the Social Worker and/or Supervisor;
 - the Area Program Manager;
 - the parent(s)/caregiver(s) with whom the child was residing or a representative from child's most recent placement resource; and
 - others, internal/external, including the CSEC MDT Coordinator when applicable who may be able to help return the child to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s).

The Area Program Manager documents the clinical review team in the electronic case record, including the date, who attended; decisions made, and planned actions with time frames. The plan is reviewed by the Supervisor and Area Program Manager during every supervision until the child is found. (See Supervision Policy)

**Gather Information
When Child who is
Missing Makes
Contact**

9. When the child contacts Department staff members, placement resources, parent(s)/caregiver(s), or others working with them, the identified adult(s) seek the following information:
- the child's location at the time of the contact and/or where the child is staying;
 - individuals who may be with the child;
 - the health and safety of the child (including safety from the influence or retaliation of those who may have been exploiting the child);

- if the child is parenting, the health, safety, and location of the infant/child;
- whether the child is attending school and/or is employed and where;
- contacts the child has made with family, other relatives, friends, probation or parole agents, etc.; and
- how the child is providing for and meeting needs and, if parenting, the infant/child's needs. (Inquire specifically if the child is trading sexual favors to meet their needs.)

The placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) notifies the Social Worker each time the child contacts them. Each time child contact information is received, the Social Worker, in consultation with the Supervisor and Area Director/designee, reassesses the child's safety and determines appropriate actions and persons responsible. (Contact with the CSEC MDT Coordinator continues throughout this time period, if applicable.)

Department staff document information in the electronic case record, including the methods the child uses to make contacts (e.g., telephone number, mobile phone application, mail, social media platform).

F. PROCEDURES: CHILD IS ABSENT

Ensure Timely Reporting to the Department

1. a) For a child who is absent and determined to be *in immediate danger* (see *Appendix B*), the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s):
 - notifies the Department (or the hotline during non-working hours); **The placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) must make personal contact with a member of the Department staff during working hours or the hotline during non-working hours; voicemail alone is not acceptable;** The placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) provides the Department with currently available information about the child's location and level of danger;
 - initiates a process to verify the child's location and safety. The child's location may be confirmed by a reliable source; the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) is not required to verify in-person;
 - discusses with the Department whether notification to law enforcement is needed. The placement resource or parent(s)/caregivers(s) then notifies local law enforcement accordingly.

b) When the Social Worker, or OCS during non-working hours, becomes aware that a child is absent and in immediate danger, they assess the nature of the danger to the child and determine (with consultation if needed) whether to complete referrals to the District Attorney, local law enforcement, and other community-based resources, consistent with State and Federal law.

c) For a child who is absent and considered *not to be in immediate danger*, the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s):

 - initiates a process to verify the child's location and safety. The child's location may be confirmed by a reliable source; the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) is not required to verify in-person;
 - notifies the Department (or the hotline during non-working hours) **within 4 hours** (if still absent);
 - if the child returns before the Department has been notified of the absence, notifies the Social Worker of the incident by the start of the next working day; and
 - notifies local law enforcement if told to do so by the Department.

d) When the Social Worker, or OCS during non-working hours, becomes

aware that a child is absent and in immediate danger, they assess the nature of the danger to the child and determine (with consultation if needed) whether to complete referrals to the District Attorney, local law enforcement, and other community-based resources, consistent with State and Federal law.

Notify CSEC MDT Coordinator if applicable

2. When a child is identified as **in immediate danger** and a 51A (regardless of screening decision) has ever been filed for human trafficking or sexual exploitation, a manager notifies and engages with the local Children's Advocacy Center's Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator (CSEC MDT Coordinator).

When a child is **not in immediate danger**, a manager notifies the CSEC MDT Coordinator within one working day.

For any child who goes absent during non-working hours, a manager notifies the CSEC MDT Coordinator within one working day.

Notify Others When Child is Court-Involved

3. If the child who is absent is court-involved and has not returned to an approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s) within 24 hours, the Social Worker or Supervisor notifies the Department Attorney and the probation officer within one working day.

Plan for Return to Placement or Home

4. Based on the information gathered about the child's location, and level of danger, the Social Worker, in consultation with the Supervisor, and as applicable the parent(s)/caregiver(s) and the CSEC MDT Coordinator, develops and initiates a plan for the child's safe and immediate return to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s), and documents the plan in the electronic case record.

Convene Clinical Review Team

5. When a child has been absent for 7 calendar days, the Area Program Manager arranges for a clinical review team **to occur no longer than 14 calendar days** after the child was identified as absent. (The APM may choose to schedule the meeting sooner than the seventh day at their discretion.) The purpose of the clinical review team is to support coordination of the child's return to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s). At a minimum, the clinical review team is attended by:
 - the Social Worker and/or Supervisor;
 - the Area Program Manager;
 - the youth;
 - the parent(s)/caregiver(s) with whom the child was residing or a representative from child's most recent placement resource; and
 - others, internal/external including CSEC MDT Coordinator if applicable, who may be able to help return the child.

The Area Program Manager documents the clinical review team in the electronic case record, including the date, who attended, decisions made, and planned actions with time frames. The plan is reviewed by the Supervisor and Area Program Manager during every supervision until the child is returned to the Department-approved placement or parent(s)/caregiver(s). (See Supervision Policy)

Area Director May Approve Alternate Plan

6. For a child in Department care or custody, an Area Director/designee may approve a plan to delay the child's return to a Department-approved placement or to the home of the parent(s)/caregiver(s) if it is in the child's best interest. The plan, which includes a timeframe, the child's current location, and contact information, is documented in the electronic case record.

G. PROCEDURES: RETURNING A CHILD WHO WAS MISSING OR ABSENT TO DEPARTMENT-APPROVED PLACEMENT OR HOME

Supporting the child's safety and stability in a Department-approved placement or at home with the parent(s)/caregiver(s) is the primary goal of the following procedures. This may require collaboration among family members, placement resources, CSEC MDT Coordinator and others such as the Juvenile Court, Department of Youth Services, local law enforcement authority, the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) Unit, and/or more than one Area Office.

The Area Director/designee (or the OCS during non-working hours), coordinates Department staff, the placement resource, CSEC MDT Coordinator and/or parent(s)/caregiver(s) in the completion of the following activities, as applicable, within timeframes that prioritize the child's safety and well-being.

Notify Others

1. The Social Worker, in collaboration with the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s), develops a plan for the following notifications, as applicable, that the child has been located:
 - child's parent(s)/caregiver(s)(s);
 - child's last placement;
 - local law enforcement;
 - NCMEC;
 - State Police AMBER Alert Coordinator;
 - when the child is court-involved, the probation officer, and the Department Attorney **within 2 working days**; and
 - all others, including the CSEC MDT coordinator, who were previously notified of the child's being missing or absent.

Determine Child's Experiences

2. The Social Worker, in consultation with the Supervisor and managers as needed, carries out the following tasks:

Within one working day:

- **Consult the child** in a trauma-informed manner (depending on the child's age and development) about the circumstances under which the child became missing or absent and the child's experiences while away, in order to:
 - determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise becoming missing or absent.
 - determine whether the child is a possible victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking. If the child is a suspected or known victim of sexual exploitation and/or human trafficking:
 - file a 51A when the child is under the age of 18;
 - notify the District Attorney and local law enforcement authority that the child of any age has been located and is a suspected or known victim of sexual exploitation and/or human trafficking; and
 - coordinate with them and any multidisciplinary team that may be established to determine and carry out other necessary steps. (See Protective Intake Policy)
 - if needed (e.g., sexual exploitation is suspected, child has an injury, or is in an acute psychiatric state), arrange for a medical screening and/or a mental/behavioral health evaluation.
- In place of the Social Worker, residential programs may choose a staff member involved with the child's case to consult the child on the proceeding points.

As soon as possible, while prioritizing child safety and well-being:

- **Consult the child's parents, Family Resource staff, placement**

resource, and/or others as appropriate, about the circumstances under which the child became missing or absent and their perspective on the location and/or type of placement that will keep the child safe and stable while working collaboratively with the CSEC MDT Coordinator when applicable.

- **Consult with the placement resource** (as applicable) and others with relevant information to discuss whether it is safe and appropriate for the child to return to the last place the child resided before being reported missing or absent. Identify whether other children in the setting may be at risk, including at risk for sexual exploitation or human trafficking.
- **For child in Department care or custody, determine where the child wants to live**, and if a change is needed what type of placement the child would prefer. Explore emergency placement with kin if indicated. (See Permanency Planning Policy)

**Support Child's
Return to Placement
or Home**

3. The Social Worker, in consultation with the Supervisor, and managers, as needed:
 - addresses the factors that contributed to the child's becoming missing or absent;
 - identifies the child's individual needs and the ability of the placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) to meet those needs;
 - requests a clinical review team, when necessary to support decision-making about a safe and appropriate placement, involving Department staff, the child, family, the CSEC MDT Coordinator when applicable and relevant others; and
 - for child in Department care or custody,
 - arranges for replacement of any lost clothing or personal items the child may need; and
 - arranges for transportation and any necessary placement stabilization services, and for the child's return to any educational/vocational program.

**Update the
Electronic Case
Record**

4. The Social Worker, in consultation with the Supervisor:
 - records any changes in the child's appearance (e.g., tattoos or other marks, hair color);
 - ensures documentation of information learned from the most recent episode of being missing/absent, (e.g., with whom the child spent time while away, location when found, antecedents of the episode, actions carried out, as well as plans to prevent a recurrence);
 - updates the Action Plan, as needed, to reflect changes in the child's placement/residence, needs and observable changes to be sought, roles of participants, and tasks/services/supports; and
 - for a child in Department care or custody, obtains and stores an identification photo of the child if the child's appearance is substantially changed or if a photo has not been taken in the previous 6 months.

**Plan for Child with
More Than Two
Episodes of
Missing/Absent
within 60 Calendar
Days**

5. The Area Director/designee convenes a child-specific planning meeting that includes the Area Resource Coordinator, placement resource and/or parent(s)/caregiver(s) as applicable, involved Department staff, and Lead Agency representative, when a Lead Agency is assigned. This meeting should include the youth and may include other family members, the CSEC MDT Coordinator if appropriate, and any others whose knowledge of the child might be helpful.

The meeting considers specific individualized strategies to prevent repeat

episodes of the child's becoming missing or absent. These strategies include, but are not limited to:

- assessing whether the child's permanency plan is appropriate and progressing or whether changes should be made;
- intensifying search for kinship placement and connections, as applicable;
- facilitating the child's opportunities for normal life experiences that are age- and developmentally-appropriate (e.g., reasonable curfews, sleepovers, time in community, pursuing interests or hobbies, and other activities);
- examining ways for the child to safely increase time with family members, girlfriends/boyfriends, and/or peers or in the community;
- collaborating with the placement resource to adjust rules and restrictions that may unnecessarily limit the child's activities or associates;
- developing interventions to keep the child engaged in treatment and in positive relationships with those with whom they reside;
- identifying precipitants to the child's becoming missing or absent and developing supportive interventions to prevent repeat episodes;
- considering appropriateness of current placement or other living situation; and
- planning for a follow-up meeting if behavior persists.

The Area Director/designee documents the plan developed in this meeting in the electronic record. Documentation includes the tasks, responsibilities, and timelines for achieving them.

**Return Child in
Department
Care/Custody
Located in Another
State**

6. The Area Director/designee coordinates the following activities, as applicable, in addition to the relevant tasks outlined in the previous section
 - contact the child welfare agency and/or tribe, when applicable, of the state where the child is located to arrange assistance for the child's return. Until the child can be returned to Massachusetts, the child may be provided placement by the local child welfare authorities or tribe in the state in which the child is located;
 - provide the necessary documents to the other jurisdiction to prove that the child is in Department care or custody;
 - document the child's consent in the electronic case record, if the child is capable of voluntarily consenting to return to Massachusetts and agrees to return voluntarily;
 - If a child age 17 years or younger refuses to return to Massachusetts, request the support of Department legal staff in filing for any necessary court orders.
 - If the child refuses to return to Massachusetts and an out-of-state placement has been located, the placement must be approved in accordance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC).
 - complete travel arrangements for the child's return, including payment, through the Regional Administrative Manager prior to any verbal authorization. The Massachusetts Probation Interstate Compact Office may assist with transportation arrangements, with the Department responsible for the cost of transportation;
 - notify the Department's ICPC Unit in Central Office to obtain guidance, when needed. While the Interstate Compact does not generally extend to children in voluntary care, most states will assist in returning a child

age 17 years or younger to the appropriate state;

- consult with Department legal staff if the child is being detained in the other state for a criminal offense;
- contact the Massachusetts Probation Interstate Compact Office, when needed. The probation officer of the court through which the Department obtained custody of the child or the Department Attorney may also provide assistance in obtaining the support of that state's court in arranging the return of the child; and
- plan for the child's safe return to a Department-approved placement (see Procedure G.2 through G.5 above).

Arrange Return of Child Located in a Foreign Country

7. The Area Director/designee contacts the Department's Office of the General Counsel and Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations to obtain assistance in arranging the return of the child.

Provide Required Data to Federal Government

8. The Department provides information and data on children missing from care or custody as is required by the federal Secretary of Health and Human Services.

H. PROCEDURES: WHEN DEPARTMENT LOCATES CHILD MISSING OR ABSENT FROM ANOTHER STATE OR JURISDICTION

The Department may become aware of a child in Massachusetts who is under the legal responsibility of another state or jurisdiction. The child may/may not be listed in the NCMEC registry. The Department may also become aware of a child in Massachusetts who is from another state or jurisdiction but not in its care or custody and who is registered as missing with NCMEC.

Alert Area Director/Designee

1. Department staff who become aware of such situations immediately alert the Area Director/designee for the service area in which the child has been located. The Department provides assistance in returning the child by coordinating with the out-of-state child welfare agency, service provider, or other authorized agency or organization.

Area Director/Designee Arranges Assistance for Child

2. The Area Director/designee for the service area in which the child has been located arranges for completion of the relevant tasks in the Interstate Compact and the following, as applicable:
 - assists in making arrangements to return the child to the child's home jurisdiction;
 - arranges placement for the child until the child's return can be arranged;
 - contacts local law enforcement in the child's home jurisdiction immediately if the child is a suspected or known victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking; and
 - contacts the appropriate probation office in Massachusetts.

Appendix A

Related Terms and Acronyms

AMBER (America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) Alert – a voluntary partnership between law enforcement authorities, broadcasters, and transportation agencies through which the Department (or other entity) may request the State Police to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child-abduction cases. This uses the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to air a description of the abducted child and suspected abductor. AMBER Alerts are requested through local law enforcement when:

- The child, who is age 17 years or younger, has been or may have been abducted; and
- The child is in danger of serious bodily harm, injury or death; and
- There is enough descriptive information to believe that an AMBER Alert will help locate the child.

BOLO (Be On the Look Out) – an internal bulletin that may be issued by a local law enforcement authority at its discretion.

Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) - child-friendly centers where a multidisciplinary team (MDT) includes but is not limited to Department of Children and Families workers, police, prosecutors, victim advocates, medical and mental health professionals and which meets to coordinate a response to allegations of child sexual and severe physical abuse.

CAC CSEC MDT- Children's Advocacy Center's Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Multidisciplinary Team - one of these teams exists for each county in Massachusetts. Each team has a coordinator who receives all reports filed under MGL c. 119, § 51A that involve sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Endangered Child Advisory – notification to local media issued by the local law enforcement authority at its discretion when it determines that media may be helpful in locating a child but the circumstances do not meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert.

MMCC (Massachusetts Missing Children Clearinghouse) – an organization housed with the State Police that provides resources for families, caregivers, and professionals assisting in the recovery of children who are missing.

NHTRC (National Human Trafficking Resource Center) – a national, toll-free 24/7 hotline that can be accessed to report a tip; connect with local anti-trafficking services; or request training, technical assistance or general information, or specific anti-trafficking resources.

Appendix B

Factors to Consider in Determining Immediate Danger for a Child who is Missing or Absent

The placement resource, parent(s)/caregiver(s), or custodian determines the child who is missing or absent **is in immediate danger** if the child:

- has been or is believed to have been abducted; **OR**
- is age 13 or younger; **OR**
- is a **current** victim of sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, or other human trafficking; **OR**
- is of any age and is believed to pose **immediate danger** to self or others based on consideration of the following factors:

The following chart indicates additional factors to be considered when determining the child's level of danger. This is not a checklist; a positive answer to any one question does not necessarily mean a child is in danger. Rather, the factors are to be used to inspire critical thinking and help the responsible adults make an informed determination.

Factor	Assessing Current Danger
Medical condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they need essential medication daily that is not likely to be available to them (e.g., insulin, anti-psychotic, anti-seizure)? • Do they have an acute medical condition that affects their safety?
Mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they in an acute mental health state? • Are they suicidal? • Did they have a recent traumatic incident or triggering event? • Is there a marked change in their behavior? (e.g. social withdrawal, sleep disturbances, prolonged negative mood) • Do they have significantly impaired judgment?
Developmental disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they have the ability for age-appropriate self-care? • Do they have the ability to recognize a dangerous situation?
Substance use/misuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there reason to believe they are actively using substances that pose immediate danger to them such as heroin? • Do they engage in dangerous behaviors to support their substance use/misuse when away from home/placement?
Friends/associates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they currently with someone who poses a significant danger to their safety? • Are they currently a target of gang activity? • Are they currently a target of traffickers, or others who exploit/recruit? • Is there reason to believe they are engaged in criminal behavior that poses an immediate danger to themselves or someone else?
History of sexual exploitation/human trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they with another child who is or has been a victim of sexual exploitation and/or human trafficking? • Are they with someone who has exploited or trafficked them in the past? • Are they with someone who has exploited or trafficked another child in the past?
Pregnant and or parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they currently with someone who poses danger to them or their infant/child? • Are they or the infant/child in need of medical care? • Has the parent placed the infant/child in danger in the past? • Is the infant/child in danger for any reason?
Time of day/weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given their developmental age and pattern of behavior, does the time of their absence pose elevated danger? • Do current weather conditions pose significant danger?
Prior incidents of missing/absent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they have a recent history of being harmed or harming others when they are missing/absent? • Is this the first incident of the child becoming missing/absent?
Legal concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anything about their legal status place them in danger? (e.g. undocumented status, pending charges)

Appendix C

Information When Reporting a Child Missing

The following information may be important in locating the child and should be provided to the necessary individuals, agencies, and organizations involved with the search:

Child Identifiers

- Age and date of birth
- Gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation
- Height and weight
- Unique identifiers (e.g. braces, glasses or contact lenses, tattoos, body piercings, scars, prosthetics or surgical implants)
- Hair, complexion, and eye color
- Photograph and video, if available
- Clothing worn when last seen
- Items that might be with the child, if known (e.g., food, cash, credit card, mobile telephone)
- Name, address, placement type, and contact information for current placement resource
- Type of custody/legal status, visitation plans/orders
- Mobile telephone number and/or email and other social media addresses, if any
- Means of transportation, if known
- Fingerprints, if available
- Blood type, if known

Social Networks of Child and Parent(s)/caregiver(s)/Placement Resource/Custodian

- Parent(s)/caregiver(s), kin, placement resource, custodian, and other social network contact information
- Location where last seen
- Locations where the child might be found or contact information for individuals who may know whereabouts
- Usual routines such as curfews and after school activities

Parent(s)/caregiver(s)/Placement Resource/Custodian Factors that May Create Danger

- Circumstances surrounding the incident
- Mental health/behavioral conditions
- Substance abuse history
- Previous history or threats of abduction, bodily harm, or death
- Non-family members living in the home

Child Factors that May Create Danger

- Medical and/or mental health/behavioral conditions and/or developmental status
- Time of day became missing
- Weather and/or other noteworthy events when identified as missing
- Circumstances surrounding the incident
- Possible gang involvement, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, or juvenile offending behavior
- Pregnant or parenting status and whether infant/child is also missing
- Past history (including other reports of being missing or habitually late)
- Substance abuse history

Department Contact Information

- Social Worker name and contact information

Appendix D

Search Activities When Child is Missing

- **Contact as applicable:**
 - Child's cell phone;
 - Most recent residence, including placement resource or custodian, to determine the circumstances under which the child became missing or absent;
 - Parents – even in situations where parental rights have been terminated, the parent may play a role in the search for their child and/or return of the child;
 - Kin, including the child's siblings;
 - Other caregivers with whom the child is known to have had a close or long term relationship;
 - Previous placements;
 - Department's hotline if the child has not been located during normal working hours; (*NOTE: The hotline will need information on what should be done if the child is located during non-working hours.*);
 - Close friends and classmates of the child, including any known boyfriends, girlfriends, or anyone else in the community with whom the child may have developed a significant relationship;
 - Neighbors;
 - Teachers, counselors, and other school personnel from the school that the child last attended or at other schools the child attended, especially those with whom the child is believed to have had a close relationship;
 - Coaches and directors of social organizations the child participates in;
 - Department and contracted provider staff who may have knowledge of the child's possible location;
 - Landlord of the child's last known address;
 - The Children's Advocacy Center's Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator if there is or has been a referral to the District Attorney's Office for Human Trafficking or Sexual Exploitation;
 - Probation officers or parole officers, child's attorney;
 - Health care providers;
 - Hospitals and emergency rooms, when specific circumstances indicate that the child may have been admitted;
 - Community/neighborhood/youth workers in the vicinities of the child's placement and/or where the child previously lived; and
 - Any other locations indicated by the specific circumstances where the child may appear such as: juvenile or adult detention centers, local emergency shelters, homeless youth programs, or hospitals.
- **Review** internet websites/social media, when determined to be necessary and safe, to find any information regarding the missing or absent child. (See Social Media Policy)
- **Provide** the child's most recent photograph to searchers.

Appendix E

Standards of Care for Children in Department Care or Custody Who are Missing or Absent from Contracted Residential Services Programs

NOTE: Throughout this document, the terms "child" and "children" are used as general and inclusive terms to mean child(ren)/youth/young adult(s) from birth up to age 23 years, including young adults who receive young adult support payments

The Department of Children and Families ("the Department") is committed to ensuring that every child resides in a safe and nurturing environment. To support this commitment, the Department has developed the Children who are Missing or Absent policy that applies to all placement resources that provide contracted residential services to children in Department care or custody.

The following standards of care set forth specific Department expectations to prevent children from becoming missing or absent from contracted residential services programs and required actions if they do. These are **urgent** situations, requiring immediate attention.

Programs are expected to document the training their staff receive in these standards and the required protocols, policies, and procedures necessary to achieve them.

A. General Requirements for Prevention

To prevent children from becoming missing or absent, residential services programs establish a milieu:

- that continually supports the engagement of children with the program, promotes positive relationships with peers and staff, creates an environment that fosters shared responsibility for individual and collective behaviors, and systematically tracks the locations of residents, in accordance with their individual treatment and safety plans;
- in which staff are mindful of each resident's unique needs, strengths, styles of communication, and individual goals;
- that encourages residents to actively participate in their own treatment planning and assists them to maintain a positive vision for themselves in the future;
- that ensures the safety and well-being of all program residents by utilizing safe and effective milieu-stabilizing and de-escalation strategies, as well as opportunities for residents to utilize self-regulating techniques; and
- that establishes an understanding that being absent or missing is unsafe, leaving the program (or failing to return on time to the program) without authorization is unacceptable, and expectations for keeping the program informed of their whereabouts in a timely manner.

B. Resident-Specific Provisions for Prevention

To prevent specific children from becoming missing or absent and to inform decision-making and actions if they are identified as such, residential services programs:

- assess the child's potential risk for leaving the program without authorization as part of Initial Safety Planning completed with the Department upon a child's entry into the program; and re-assess this risk as an ongoing activity throughout the child's participation in the program;
- include specific preventive programmatic and supportive interventions in the child's Individualized Safety and Treatment Plans based on the Initial Safety Planning assessment and ongoing; and
- include in the Emergency Fact Sheet developed for each resident at the time of admission information that may be important if the child becomes missing or absent (see Appendix C); update the Emergency Fact Sheet as additional information becomes available.

C. Reporting and Responding to Children Identified as Missing or Absent

To prevent harm to a child whose absence is unauthorized and locate them as soon as possible, residential services programs:

- enact a written protocol that meets Department policy and clearly sets forth how the program will address situations in which a child is identified as missing or absent; and
- submit an Incident Report in accordance with Incident Reporting Guidelines.

D. Searching for Children who are Missing, Verifying the Location and Safety of Children who are Absent, and Returning Children Safely to Department-Approved Placement

To support locating children who become missing or absent and their safe return to Department-approved placement, residential services programs enact a written protocol that meets Department policy and:

- establishes the program's expectations for searching for children who become missing, verifying the location and safety of children who become absent, and responding to children when they return to the program, including those with more than one episode of becoming missing or absent;
- includes daily documentation of efforts made to return children who are missing or absent to Department-approved placement for as long as the program's services continue to be authorized for them by the Department;
- identifies the circumstances under which the program may request the Department to convene a child-specific planning meeting for a child with more than two episodes of being missing or absent within 60 calendar days; and
- provides for the program to ensure that the child is safely transported back to the program when they have been found. The program could do this directly, using program staff, relief staff, etc., or through an agreement with local law enforcement.

E. Role of the Department and Department Social Worker Re: Children who are Missing or Absent

Residential services programs are expected to coordinate with the Department their activities in preventing and responding to situations in which children in Department care or custody become missing or absent. The primary contact on an individual level is the Department Social Worker; however, when a child is missing or absent, the Department may designate a case-specific manager who will also be an important contact.

Appendix F

Responding to Child who is Missing/Absent

Placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s) identifies that child is not where expected, and determines whether:

CHILD IS MISSING (Whereabouts Unknown)

CHILD IS ABSENT (Whereabouts Known)

	IN IMMEDIATE DANGER (See Appendix B)	NOT IN IMMEDIATE DANGER	IN IMMEDIATE DANGER (See Appendix B)	NOT IN IMMEDIATE DANGER
Immediate	Placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiates search Files report with police & obtains contact info & NCIC# Notifies DCF/Hotline (no voicemail) SW/OCS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirms police report or completes, if necessary, & documents information in electronic case record If court-involved, notifies DCF Attorney & Probation Officer (or within 1 workday during non-work hours) Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notifies CSEC MDT Coordinator if 51A was ever filed for human trafficking/sexual exploitation (or within 1 workday during non-work hours) 	Placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiates search If child returns, notifies SW by start of next workday 	Placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notifies DCF/Hotline (no voicemail) Verifies child's location & safety Collaborates w/ DCF about whether to notify police Manager: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notifies CSEC MDT Coordinator if 51A ever filed for human trafficking/sexual exploitation (or within 1 workday during non-work hours) 	Placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to verify child's location & safety w/ reliable source If child returns, notifies SW by start of next workday
Within 4 Hrs	<i>All tasks must be completed within 2 hrs.</i>	Placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Files report with police & obtains contact info & NCIC# Notifies DCF/Hotline (no voicemail) SW/OCS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirms police report, or completes, if necessary, & documents information in electronic case record 	<i>All tasks must be completed within 2 hrs.</i>	Placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notifies DCF/Hotline (no voicemail) Assists DCF as requested
Within 24 Hrs	SW: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If not in immediate danger and court involved, notifies DCF Attorney & Probation Officer within 1 workday Manager: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If not in immediate danger and 51A was ever filed for human trafficking/sexual exploitation, notifies CSEC MDT Coordinator within 1 workday SW w/ Supervisor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinates & documents search activities & updates search plan weekly If child age 20 or younger, contacts NCMEC (1-800-843-5678), provides NCIC # & photo 		SW: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If court-involved, notifies DCF Attorney & Probation Officer within 1 workday Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If not in immediate danger and 51A was ever filed for human trafficking/sexual exploitation, notifies CSEC MDT Coordinator within 1 workday SW w/ Supervisor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops, initiates & documents plan for safe & immediate return to DCF-approved placement or family. Area Director/designee may approve plan to delay return if in child's best interest 	
Within 7 Days	APM arranges a clinical review team, to occur within 14 (since missing or absent) calendar days ; attended by SW &/or Supervisor, APM, placement resource or parent(s)/caregiver(s), CSEC MDT Coordinator when applicable, & others. APM documents CRT. APM & Supervisor review plan at every supervision.			

Returning Child who was Missing or Absent to Parent(s)/Caregiver(s) or Department-Approved Placement

To support child's safety and stability,
DCF collaborates with family, placement resource, and others
such as CSEC MDT Coordinator, Juvenile Court, DYS, police, and ICPC Unit to:

Within 1 Workday	<p>SW or residential staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consults child about circumstances that led to becoming missing or absent & experiences while away to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ determine primary contributing factors ○ determine whether child is possible victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking, & if yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ file 51A when child <18 ▪ notify District Attorney(s) & local law enforcement authority(ies) ▪ coordinate with them & the multidisciplinary team ▪ arrange medical screening &/or mental health evaluation, if needed
ASAP while prioritizing child safety & well-being	<p>SW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consults child's parents, Family Resource staff, placement resource, &/or others about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ circumstances under which child became missing or absent, ○ type of placement needed & ○ whether return to previous residence is safe & appropriate • Determines where child wants to live/type of placement
Continuing	<p>SW w/ placement resource: Develops plan for notifying that child has been located (if applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child's parent(s)/guardian(s)/legal custodian • child's last placement • local law enforcement • NCMEC • Amber Alert Coordinator • if court-involved: court, probation officer & DCF Attorney (within 2 workdays) • all others previously notified that child was missing or absent <p>SW w/ Supervisor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops plan to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ address contributing factors ○ identify child's individual needs in prospective placement/current living situation ○ request a clinical review team, if needed ○ arrange replacement of child's lost clothing or personal items ○ arrange for transportation, placement stabilization, & return to educational/vocational program • Updates electronic case record, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ changes in child's appearance (e.g., tattoos or other marks, hair color) ○ photo if appearance changed or if not taken in 6 months ○ information learned ○ updated Action Plan as needed <p>Area Director/designee: Convenes a planning meeting for child with more than two episodes of missing/absent in 60 calendar days to consider strategies to prevent repeat episodes. Meeting includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area Resource Coordinator • Lead Agency representative (if assigned) • placement resource • other DCF staff • youth, family, & others if invited

Appendix G

When a Child is Missing or Absent and is a Victim of Sexual Exploitation and/or Trafficking (CSEC)

There are specific procedures to follow when responding to a CSEC child who is missing or absent due to elevated concerns about their safety and well-being.

Definitions

Human trafficking victim – a person who is subjected to harboring, recruitment, enticement, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting for the purpose of:

- **sex trafficking** (e.g., performance of a commercial sex act, inducement to perform a commercial sex act, forced sexual services and/or sexually explicit performance); and/or
- **labor trafficking** (e.g., subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery).

Sexually exploited – any person under age 21 years who

- engages in, agrees to engage in, or offers to engage in, sexual conduct with another person in exchange for a fee or something of value or in exchange for food, shelter, clothing, education, or care; or
- as the term is defined in M.G.L.c119 §21.

Notify the CSEC MDT Coordinator

If a 51A (regardless of screening decision) has ever been filed for human trafficking or sexual exploitation on behalf of the missing or absent child, an Area Office manager notifies the local Children's Advocacy Center's Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator (CSEC MDT Coordinator).

When a child is in **immediate danger**, an Area Office manager notifies the CSEC MDT Coordinator immediately.

When a child is **not in immediate danger**, an Area Office manager notifies the CSEC MDT Coordinator within one working day.

For any child who goes missing or absent during **non-working hours**, an Area Office manager notifies the CSEC MDT Coordinator within one working day.

Notification does not have to be in person. Email or voicemail are both acceptable.

Engage the CSEC MDT Coordinator

Ongoing contact with the CSEC MDT Coordinator continues throughout the child's episode of missing or absent, including after the child returns. The CSEC MDT Coordinator should be invited to meetings and asked for input when appropriate, including:

- while assessing or reassessing the level of danger to the child;
- while developing and updating the search plan for a missing child;
- while developing and updating the plan for returning an absent child;
- at the clinical review team; and
- while deciding where a child should live after they return.

Appendix H

What to Do When Your Child is Missing or Absent for Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)

If Child is MISSING (*Whereabouts UNKNOWN*)

If in IMMEDIATE DANGER

(Abducted; age 13 or younger; **current** victim of sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, or other human trafficking; **OR** is of any age and believed to pose **immediate danger** to self or others due to medical condition, mental health, developmental disability, substance use/misuse, concerning friends/associates, pregnant/parenting, time of day/weather conditions, prior incidents, legal concerns)

- Immediately begin searching if you haven't started searching already (see "Ideas for Searching" below)
- Immediately file report with police
- Call DCF right after police (via the hotline during non-working hours: 1-800-792-5200) – Make sure you talk to someone; don't just leave a message

If NOT in immediate danger

- Immediately begin searching if you haven't started searching already (see "Ideas for Searching" below)
- File a report with police no later than 4 hours from the time child went missing (if still missing)
- Call DCF *within 4 hours* (via the hotline during non-working hours: 1-800-792-5200) if child is still missing – Make sure you talk to someone; don't just leave a message
- If child returns within 4 hours, call your Social Worker by start of next workday

Ideas for Searching: Call child's cell phone; check any place child was expected to have gone; call or visit parents, kin, friends, and other caregivers with whom child has had a significant relationship; contact neighbors, teachers, coaches, and professionals who know the child; check places child frequents; check child's computer.

When you speak to the police: Ask police for the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) number or any other reference number they use and contact information. DCF will need that information to follow up with them.

If Child is ABSENT (*Whereabouts KNOWN but won't come home*)

If in IMMEDIATE DANGER

(Abducted; age 13 or younger; **current** victim of sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, or other human trafficking; **OR** is of any age and believed to pose **immediate danger** to self or others due to medical condition, mental health, developmental disability, substance use/misuse, concerning friends/associates, pregnant/parenting, time of day/weather conditions, prior incidents, legal concerns)

- Call DCF (via the hotline during non-working hours: 1-800-792-5200) – Make sure you talk to someone; don't just leave a message. Be prepared to discuss what you know about the child's current location and level of danger. DCF will help determine whether police should be notified.
- Verify the child's location and safety

If NOT in immediate danger

- Try to verify child's location and safety in person or with a reliable source
- Call DCF *within 4 hours* (via the hotline during non-working hours: 1-800-792-5200) if child is still absent – Make sure you talk to someone; don't just leave a message
- If child returns within 4 hours, call your Social Worker by start of next workday

Useful information when reporting a child MISSING

Department Contact Information

- Social Worker name and contact information

Child Identifiers

- Age and date of birth
- Gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation
- Height and weight
- Unique identifiers (braces, glasses, tattoos, scars, prosthetics, or surgical implants, etc.)
- Hair, complexion, and eye color
- Photograph (and video), if available
- Clothing worn when last seen
- Items that might be with the child, if known (e.g., food, cash credit card, mobile telephone)
- Your name, address, and contact information
- Type of custody/legal status, visitation plans, orders
- Cell phone number and/or email and other social media addresses, if any
- Means of transportation, if known
- Fingerprints, if available
- Blood type, if known

Social Networks

- Parent/caregiver, kin, placement resource, and other social network contact information
- Location where last seen
- Locations where child might be found or contact information for individuals who may know whereabouts
- Usual routines such as curfews and after school activities

Factors that May Create Danger

- Circumstances surrounding the incident
- Health/behavioral conditions, including child's medical and/or developmental status
- Substance use/misuse history
- Previous history or threats of abduction, bodily harm, or death
- Non-family members living in the home
- Time of day became missing
- Weather and/or other noteworthy events when identified as missing
- Child's possible gang involvement or juvenile offending behavior
- Youth's pregnant or parenting status and whether infant/child is also missing
- Past history (including other reports of child being missing or habitually late)

What to do if the MISSING or ABSENT child contacts you

Obtain as much of the following information as you can from the child and share it with DCF and others searching for the child as soon as possible:

- child's location at the time of contact and/or where child is staying;
- individuals who may be with child;
- health and safety of child (including safety from the influence or retaliation of those who may have been exploiting the child);
- if child is parenting, the health, safety, and location of the infant/child;
- whether child is attending school and/or is employed and where;
- contacts the child has made with family, other relatives, friends, probation or parole agents, etc.; and
- how the child is providing for and meeting needs (and, if parenting, the infant/child's needs).

How you can help after the child is found

Tell DCF right away if you find the child. DCF will speak with you and the child to determine:

- What may have contributed to the child becoming missing or absent, especially any indications that the child may have been sexually exploited or trafficked while away;
- What can be done to prevent the child from becoming missing or absent in the future;
- How you feel about the child returning to your care; and
- What services or actions you believe are needed to maintain the child's safety and well-being after returning to your care.

DCF may invite you to a clinical conference that will address these and other issues. Whether the child returns to live with you or not, your participation will be very helpful to addressing the child's future needs.