

Big Bend Community Based Care Policy & Procedure

Series: 500: Special Populations

Policy Name: Prevention, Reporting and Services to Missing Children

Policy Number: 500

Origination Date: 03/09/2009 **Revised:** Board Meeting of 12/13/2018

Regulation: 39.604, F.S.
937.012, F.S.
937.021, F.S.
937.022, F.S.
937.028, F.S.
65C-30.019, F.A.C.
CFOP 175-85
CFOP 215-6

Referenced Document:

500-500 x 1, Missing Child Information Sheet

Policy

It is the policy of Big Bend Community Based Care, Inc. (BBCBC), to engage in prevention, reporting and services for missing children, as they are a priority population.

Procedure

A. Missing Children.

1. A child should be considered missing when the child's whereabouts are unknown, and:
 - a. The child has been adjudicated dependent and placed in out-of-home or in-home care; and/or
 - b. The child is the subject of an active protective supervision case; and/or
 - c. The child is the subject of an active or emergency shelter order; and/or
 - d. The child is the subject of an active abuse investigation, there is a preponderance of evidence to support the abuse, neglect or abandonment allegations, a Take into Custody Order will be sought for the child, and:
 - i. The parent or legal custodian has been notified of the requirement to report a change in residence or location of the child to the protective investigator and the parent causes the child to move;
 - ii. Or allows the child to be moved, to a different residence or location;

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j. More openness regarding the child's case information.

k. Attentive case management.

C. Initial Response by a Caregiver to a Child Who Is Believed to be a Missing Child.

1. DCMs will instruct caregivers to document all their contacts and attempts made to locate the missing child.
2. Local law enforcement shall be contacted immediately when:
 - a. The child is under age 13;
 - b. The child has a physical or mental incapacity, or a developmental or behavioral challenge that renders the situation more dangerous than it would be for a child with more maturity or resources;
 - c. The child is with others who may endanger his or her safety;
 - d. The child is known or believed to be in a life-threatening situation;
 - e. The child is missing under circumstances inconsistent with established behaviors; or
 - f. There is any other reason to believe that the child is in a dangerous situation.
3. As soon as the determination is made that child is missing (not to exceed four (4) hours) the caregiver will call local law enforcement and ask the officer to:
 - a. Take a "Missing Child Report";
 - b. Assign a case number and provide the number back to the caregiver or person reporting the child missing;
 - c. Provide a copy of the law enforcement case report, when it is available;
 - d. If the responding law enforcement officer refuses to take a missing child report the caregiver will:
 - i. Ask the responding officer to explain why they will not take a missing child report; and
 - ii. Contact the child's case manager and explain the situation to them;
 - e. The caregiver will notify the child's DCM or the CMO's on-call staff and share all pertinent information listed above with emphasis on providing the law enforcement agency name, case number and if available, a copy of the Law Enforcement report.
4. If Exigent Circumstances do not exist, the caregiver will make immediate efforts to locate the child, including a check to see what, if any, of the child's personal belongings are missing or if the child left a note. Other efforts to locate the child may include the following:
 - a. Contact friends;
 - b. Contact neighbors;

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- c. Contact school;
 - d. Check locations the child is known to frequent;
 - e. Contact relatives;
 - f. Contact employers/co-workers;
 - g. Contact former placements;
 - h. Contact DJJ case managers;
 - i. Contact former DCF/CBC case managers;
 - j. Contact local hospitals;
 - k. Check local transportation terminals.
5. If efforts to locate the child are unsuccessful, the caregiver will:
- a. Write down what the child was wearing the last time the child was seen and obtain a recent photo.
 - b. Notify local law enforcement to file a missing child report.
 - c. Notify the child's DCM or emergency on-call staff and share all pertinent information listed above with emphasis on providing the law enforcement agency name and case number if available.
6. If at any time new information is obtained on the child's location, all law enforcement agencies and other agencies notified that the child was missing will be contacted immediately and appropriate efforts taken to return the child to the caregiver's home.
7. If at any time the child returns to the caregiver's home all law enforcement agencies and other agencies notified that the child was missing will be contacted immediately.

D. Dependency Case Manager (DCM) Response.

1. The DCM will notify, as applicable, the following persons:
- a. Local law enforcement will be notified immediately in all cases of missing children whose location is not determined. The responding officer will be asked to:
 - i. Take a report of the missing child; and
 - ii. Assign a case number and provide the number back to the caregiver or person reporting the child missing;
 - iii. If the responding law enforcement officer refuses to take a missing child report the DCM will:

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- a) Contact the local law enforcement agency that refused to take the missing person's report and attempt to report the child as missing (if the attempt had been by the caregiver); and
 - b) If the officer still refuses to take the report, the case manager should contact the shift supervisor and attempt to resolve the issue preventing the agency from accepting the missing child report; and
 - c) If the local law enforcement agency still refuses to take a missing child report, the case manager should contact their designated BBCBC missing child point of contact for assistance;
 - d) If the local child location point of contact requires further assistance in getting a child reported as missing to local law enforcement they should contact their Regional Criminal Justice Coordinator or the DCF Child Location Unit in Tallahassee.
- b. The child's parents, legal custodian, relatives or foster parent;
 - c. DCM Supervisor;
 - d. The Court;
 - e. The child's Guardian ad Litem;
 - f. Any other person the DCM deems essential.
2. In addition to notifying the above people, the DCM will complete an incident report and Missing Child Report Form in accordance with *BBCBC OP 800-805, Incident Reporting and Client Risk Prevention*.
 - a. The completed MCRF form and Incident Report will be submitted to BBCBC and administrative/DCF contacts via email for entry of the episode into the Missing Child Tracking System.
 - b. Upon entry and transmission of the episode into the Missing Child Tracking System, FDLE/NCIC and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) are notified that the child is missing.
 3. The DCM will document in FSFN contact with Law Enforcement, completion of the incident report and MCRF, efforts to locate the child. Care should be given to explicitly indicate all contacts made and attempted.
 4. If the missing child is residing in another state or nation the following actions will be taken:
 - a. For all Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) cases, the DCM will immediately contact the social service worker providing supervision to request their assistance in the reporting of the child as missing to law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the child was residing.

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- b. For children not placed pursuant to the ICPC, the DCM will contact the caregiver and request their assistance in reporting the child as missing.
 - c. The DCM will contact any parents and/or relatives who reside locally to see if they have any information on the location of the child.
 - d. This information should be shared with the worker providing supervision and the caregiver to assist law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the child was residing.
5. The child's DCM shall notify CLS within one (1) working day of the episode and with their assistance, file notice with the court in the form of a letter that the child has been reported as a missing child.
 6. The DCM and caregivers will ensure that every effort is made to encourage a child to return if they are contacted by the missing child.
 7. The DCM will cooperate with Law Enforcement, providing requested information and by making the child's case record available if requested.
 8. If at any time the child returns to the caregivers home, all agencies notified that the child was missing will be contacted immediately.
 - a. If at any time new information is obtained on the child's location, all agencies notified that the child was missing will be contacted immediately and appropriate efforts taken to return the child to the caregivers home.
 - b. An updated Incident Report will be sent in accordance with *BBCBC OP 800-805, Incident Reporting and Client Risk Prevention*.

E. Case Management Services While a Child is Missing.

1. Efforts to locate the child will occur weekly for the first three (3) months a child is missing and monthly thereafter.
 - a. Contacts will be documented explicitly in the child's FSFN record and in all judicial review reports.
 - b. Examples of location efforts:
 - i. Contact friends, relatives, parents, caregivers, school personnel, employers, Guardian ad litem, therapist, counselor, service provider and other significant individuals to see if they can offer any leads.
 - a) **Effective Practice.** Make notifications count as efforts to locate! After advising the required individuals that the child is missing, follow up with questions, such as:
 - Have you seen the child?
 - Do you know where the child might be?
 - Do you know who the child might be with?
 - Did the child mention running away?
 - If the child contacts you, can you contact me?

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- ii. Contact other programs and services for help locating the child. For example, Department of Juvenile Justice, Medicaid, Child Support, Social Security.
 - iii.
 - iv. Make home and field visits to places familiar to the child, such as malls, schools, playgrounds, neighborhood where the child currently resides, past neighborhoods and neighborhoods of friends and family. Also, visit runaway shelters, DJJ facilities, hospitals, transportation hubs and areas where children and teens congregate.
 - a) **Effective Practice.** When checking physical locations for a missing child, make sure to bring missing child flyers for posting and distribution.
2. The DCM will interview the child's caregiver to determine whether or not the child will be placed with them upon return.
- a. The DCM will explore other placement options if:
 - i. The caregivers do not wish for the child to return;
 - ii. The child expresses a strong aversion to returning to the previous placement; or
 - iii. If return to the placement is otherwise determined not to be in the child's best interest.
3. If a child becomes 18 years old while reported as missing, all agencies notified that the child was missing will be contacted and notified that the child has become 18 years old.

F. Response to Interventions for Children Who Return.

1. When the child returns, the child will hear and see statements of concern regarding the child's safety and well-being from the adults who have significant relations with the child.
2. Relatives, non-relatives, foster parents and other caregivers shall be instructed to take care of the child's immediate needs upon return, such as food, bathing, medical attention, rest, etc.
 - a. Other immediate needs may include psychotherapeutic and behavioral interventions;
 - b. The child will be interviewed to determine medical attention and/or other services are needed;
 - c. If discipline or consequences are appropriate, they can be delayed until after the immediate needs are met;
 - d. Care of immediate needs may delay a calm discussion of the incident and clarification of behavioral expectations.
3. The DCM will conduct a face to face visit with the child and take a new photograph within twenty-four (24) hours of the child's return and, if age appropriate, the child will be interviewed privately by the DCM to determine:
 - a. The child's need for further services and/or change in placement;
 - b. The circumstances causing/precipitating the episode.
4. The DCM will consult with a supervisor and the caregiver to determine the need for a staffing to discuss service needs, a case plan update possible placement changes, etc., and including

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caregivers, Children's Legal Services, clinical staff, the Guardian Ad Litem and teachers, as applicable.

5. When the child is located and/or returned, the DCM shall update the incident report in accordance with *BBCBC OP 800-805, Incident Reporting and Client Risk Prevention*, and immediately notify:
 - a. The child's parents/legal guardian;
 - b. Law Enforcement;
 - c. The child's caregivers;
 - d. The Guardian Ad Litem;
 - e. The Court.

This updated incident report shall be submitted by noon (12:00 p.m.) the next business day through the appropriate incident report email address.

6. Should a child returning from runaway status express a desire to live with a person or family member who wishes to be considered as a placement for the child, a home study and background check shall be conducted to determine if the home is an appropriate option.
7. The DCM will review the child's case plan each time a child returns and will update the case plan, if necessary and submit the update to the court.
 - a. The plan will include appropriate service tasks;
 - b. The caregiver will be included in the case plan update.
8. The DCM will ensure that FSFN is updated upon the child's return to reflect that the child has returned.
9. All intervention actions taken when a child has returned will be documented in FSFN chronological notes. All information shall be placed in FSFN within forty-eight (48) hours of the child's return.
10. Additional training or consultation to caregivers will be identified and provided, if necessary, to assist them to provide appropriate care to the child who has returned.