



NH Department of Health & Human Services  
Division for Children, Youth & Families

## DCYF Standard Operating Procedure

### 1558.2 MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES - JJS

Policy Directive: **21-28**

Effective Date: **January 2022**

Implements Policy: **1558**

Approved:

Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director

This SOP defines expectations when a child involved with JJS has been abducted, run away, escaped or absconded, or otherwise gone missing.

#### Procedure

*The following information is to support the implementation of the above referenced policy. This document shall not preclude staff from using their professional judgement based on individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the policy.*

- I. When a JPPO receives a report that a child is missing, they immediately determine if the child is involved with DCYF (if unknown).
- II. If DCYF is not involved, the JPPO takes minimal information, including if there are concerns that the child has been abducted, and directs the reporter to contact law enforcement. The JPPO then:
  - A. Contacts law enforcement as well and provides the information obtained; and
  - B. Consults with a Supervisor to determine if a report should be made through Central Intake.
  - C. If law enforcement is making the report to request a CHINS case for a runaway, the JPPO should inform to contact Central Intake to make their request.
- III. If DCYF is involved, the JPPO engages the reporter to determine if the child has run away, been abducted, escaped/absconded from parole/administrative release, or is otherwise missing and obtains the following information:
  - A. The reporter's name, contact information, and relationship to the child;
  - B. The child's demographic information;
  - C. A physical description of the child, including:
    1. What they were wearing when last seen; and
    2. Any birth marks, tattoos, or piercings the child has;
  - D. When, where, and with whom the child was last seen and who saw them;

- E. The parents/guardians names and contact information (if different/unknown);
  - F. If the parents/guardians (as applicable) are aware of the situation;
  - G. Why the child is believed to be missing, including:
    - 1. If the child has a history of running away or making threats to run away; and
    - 2. If anyone has made threats to take the child and if yes, their name and relationship to the child;
  - H. If there are concerns the child has been abducted; and
  - I. If law enforcement has been contacted and if they have, who did they speak with and was a missing person's report filed.
- IV. If there are concerns that the child was abducted, but law enforcement has not been contacted, the JPPO directs the caller to contact law enforcement where the child is thought to have been abducted immediately.
- A. If there are concerns that a child has been abducted and it appears that the reporter may not contact law enforcement, the JPPO contacts law enforcement immediately to ensure a report is made.
- V. The JPPO immediately notifies the Supervisor of any situation in which a child involved with DCYF (regardless of legal status) is thought to be missing.
- A. The Supervisor immediately notifies the appropriate Field Administrator of any situation in which a child with whom DCYF has a legal relationship is believed to have been abducted and follows all procedures outlined in policy 1099 Critical Incident Reporting - Case Specific.
- VI. If the child is currently involved with DCYF, the JPPO will seek additional information to aid in locating the child once any concern of abduction (as applicable) has been addressed.
- VII. The JPPO should seek information that can assist in understanding the child's current circumstances and locating the child. This may include:
- A. If the child has any medical, physical, or mental health needs;
  - B. If the child requires medication, and if yes, when did they last take their medication and is it accounted for;
  - C. Whether any of the child's clothing or other personal items are missing;
  - D. Any cell phone, email, and social media accounts the child may have;
  - E. Any websites the child is known to have visited;

- F. Attempts already made to locate the child; and
  - G. The name and contact information of family or friends of the child who may know more information or who the child may be with or go to (work, school, appointments, etc.).
- VIII. Once additional information has been gathered, the JPPO requests that the reporter contact law enforcement (if not already done) to open a missing child report.
- IX. Specific to in-home cases, a JPPO may consult with their Supervisor and determine, based on their knowledge of the family, professional assessment of the situation, and responsibility to the Court, it is prudent to give the child additional time to return before completing the Missing Child Report (Form 1558) unless the child:
- A. Is under 13 years of age;
  - B. Did not return to their residence the night before or has been absent for more than 12 hours (in which case the JPPO will make a report to law enforcement and complete the Form 1558 immediately);
  - C. Has been absent for less than 12 hours, but will be missing 12 hours during non-traditional work hours if they do not return (unless there is an agreed-upon, documented plan with On-Call to follow-up on the child's whereabouts and notify the Human Trafficking Specialist when NCMEC is notified, including the date, time, and who made the report);
  - D. Is believed to be in an area unfamiliar to them;
  - E. Has a significant cognitive impairment or developmental delay;
  - F. Is known to be currently experiencing mental health symptoms that would increase risk to the child (engaging in self-harm or experiencing suicidal ideation);
  - G. Is substance dependent or requires life-saving medications;
  - H. Is in a potentially life-threatening situation;
  - I. Is believed to be with others who could endanger their welfare;
  - J. Is suspected or known to be a victim of sex trafficking;
  - K. Is absent under circumstances inconsistent with their established patterns of behavior and this absence cannot be readily explained; or
  - L. Has disappeared under circumstances that would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the child should be considered at higher risk.

- X. When it is determined that giving the child additional time to return is warranted, the JPPO will ensure the Form 1558 is submitted no later than 12 hours after the child was first noted to be missing if the child has not returned.
- XI. Before completing the Form 1558, the JPPO calls law enforcement to:
  - A. Confirm a report has been made and provide supplemental information as appropriate;
  - B. Obtain the report and NCIC numbers (if available);
    - 1. If the child has not been entered into NCIC, the JPPO inquires as to why not, asks that they be entered, and immediately consults with the Supervisor if law enforcement declines; and
  - C. Coordinate efforts to locate the child.
- XII. The JPPO then notifies all parties that the child's whereabouts are unaccounted for.
  - A. Parents/guardians should be notified as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the workday, unless otherwise directed by law enforcement.
  - B. Other parties should be notified as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the next business day.
- XIII. The JPPO consults with the Supervisor as to next steps to locate the child (in-person efforts, telephone calls, etc.), and determines:
  - A. If court action may be taken; and
  - B. The plan for the child once located.
- XIV. If the child is believed to be out of NH, the JPPO notifies the Deputy Compact Administrator for the Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ).
- XV. The JPPO or Supervisor completes the Form 1558, and emails it, with a picture of the child and the plan for placement of the child when recovered, to the "Youth Runaway Group" before the end of their work hours.
- XVI. The Supervisor verifies the following with the JPPO:
  - A. Law enforcement was notified and the child is entered into NCIC as a missing person; and
  - B. The child is reported to NCMEC.
- XVII. The JPPO supports efforts to locate and return a missing child by:

- A. Reviewing initial efforts to locate the child with their supervisor within 24 hours and establishing an ongoing plan to locate the child;
- B. Maintaining ongoing contact with the parents/guardians, siblings, friends, school personnel, professionals, other collateral contacts, and any JPPO who may know the child, to attempt to determine the possible location of the child. The JPPO should:
  - 1. Maintain weekly (at minimum) contact with the parents/guardians to share any information received and ask if they have heard from the child;
  - 2. Advise contacts that any person can add information to the NCMEC report by calling the NCMEC at 1800-THE-LOST (1800-843-5678); and
  - 3. Review any websites and social media (as accessible and in compliance with DHHS policy) that the child is reported to have used every week to monitor for updates;
- C. Maintaining contact with local law enforcement and other responding agencies to provide and receive updates on any new information;
- D. Reviewing efforts to locate the child with their supervisor every 14 calendar days after the date of the child’s disappearance; and
- E. Providing ongoing updates to the “DHHS-DCYF-Youth Runaway” email address regarding the continued runaway status and any changes at 10 calendar days after the date of the child’s disappearance, and every 14 calendar days thereafter.

XVIII. The Supervisor:

- A. Ensures that there is continued focus on locating the child; and
- B. Continually documents all reviews of the child’s status in the DCYF electronic information system.

XIX. The Field Administrator or their designee:

- A. Provides oversight at least once every other week that ensures efforts to locate the child continue; and
- B. Provides reports and updates to the DCYF Leadership team upon request.

XX. If the child is still missing and the case is due to close, the JPPO will consult with their Supervisor to determine next steps, which may include consultation with the Court or Field Administrator.

<b>Applicable Forms</b>	
<b>Form</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>1558</b>	<b>Missing Child Report</b>

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q1. Can DCYF make a report to law enforcement if the child remains in the custody of their parents/guardians?

- A DCYF has an obligation under [42 USC 671\(a\)\(9\)\(C\)](#) to make a report to law enforcement for any child involved with the Division who is thought to be missing.
- A The JPPO should work with the parents/guardians to assist them in making the report, but also follow-up with law enforcement to ensure the report is made and coordinate efforts to locate the child.

### Q2. What do I do if law enforcement declines to take a missing child report or to enter the child in NCIC?

- A Under RSA 169-E law enforcement is obligated to take a missing child report from DCYF when DCYF has a relationship with the child.
- A If law enforcement declines to take the report or enter the child into NCIC, the JPPO should engage them as to the reason, document the reason, and consult with a Supervisor.

### Q3. Where can I get additional support around missing child?

- A The Human Tracking Specialist is available to support DCYF staff as they search for a missing child and when the child has been located, including how to take minimal facts from the child.
- A A good resource around missing children is the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#). Their website has helpful tips and training materials that are available to all.

## Glossary and Document Specific Definitions

A - B    C - D    E - F    G - I    J - L    M - N    O - Q    R - S    T - V    W - Z

## Document Change Log

PD	Modification Made	Approved	Date
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