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|  <p>NH Department of Health & Human Services Division for Children, Youth & Families</p> | DCYF Standard Operating Procedure | |
| | 1558.5 LOCATED CHILD PROCEDURES - CPS | |
| | Policy Directive: 21-28 Effective Date: January 2022 Implements Policy: 1558 | Approved:  Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director |

This SOP defines expectations upon return of a child involved with CPS who has been 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 the missing child is located, the CPSW immediately notifies:
 - A. Law enforcement and coordinates efforts to interview the child as appropriate;
 - B. The parents/guardians (unless requested otherwise by law enforcement);
 - C. The "DHHS-DCYF-Youth Runaway" email account;
 - D. The placement provider (as applicable); and
 - E. Other individuals or agencies as appropriate.

- II. Unless there are mitigating circumstances, the CPSW is expected to meet with the child (in collaboration with law enforcement and other responding agencies when applicable) within 24 hours to assess their safety and well-being and complete required screening (see policy 1554 Human Trafficking Response). Mitigating circumstances may include, but are not limited to:
 - A. The child is located out of state and is not returned to NH within 24 hours;
 - B. The child is hospitalized and the attending physician/psychiatrist recommends against it; or
 - C. The parents/guardians refuse to allow access as requested.

- III. Any mitigating circumstance is discussed with the Supervisor and documented in the DCYF electronic information system. When it is determined appropriate to see the child at a later date, documentation should include:
 - A. The justification for not seeing the child within 24 hours;

- B. Efforts to still assess the child's physical and mental health;
 - C. Efforts to still screen for human trafficking; and
 - D. The plan to see the child as soon as is appropriate.
- IV. The CPSW takes a photograph of the child involved in an open case as soon as possible upon their return and appropriately documents any new physical characteristics (such as marks and tattoos).
- V. When the child appears to need immediate medical care, the CPSW works with the parents/guardians and placement provider (as applicable) to have the child's medical needs assessed by asking the caregiver to:
- A. Consult with a medical professional to determine if the child should be seen; and
 - B. Facilitate any recommended evaluations or follow-up; or
 - C. Have the child brought to the nearest emergency room (as indicated by the need).
- VI. If the caregiver declines to consult with a medical provider or follow the providers recommendations, the CPSW:
- A. Asks the reason for their refusal,
 - B. Engages the caregiver around the need for medical care and asks them to reconsider;
 - C. Documents the response in the DCYF electronic information system; and
 - D. Consults with their Supervisor to determine next steps to assess the child's medical needs and obtain appropriate medical care.
- VII. For children who do not require immediate medical care, the CPSW ensures medical consultation for the child within 24 hours of the child being located. This can occur:
- A. Through the placement provider's on-site services (for residential care);
 - B. Through the placement facilitating medical care;
 - C. By asking the parents/guardians or placement provider to consult with the child's primary care physician; or
 - D. By the CPSW consulting with the DCYF Foster Care Nurse Consultant.
- VIII. Results of all medical assessment/consultations and any resulting recommendations for follow-up care are documented in the DCYF electronic information system and case file.

- IX. The CPSW works with the child’s placement provider, parents/guardians, and any other team members (to include, but not limited to law enforcement, child advocacy centers, and medical personnel) as applicable to ensure follow-up around any outstanding needs.
 - A. The CPSW completes the Human Trafficking screen in the DCYF electronic information system and submits the Return of Missing Child Report (Form 1559) to the “Youth Runaway Group” within 5 business days.
- X. When the child is believed to be the victim of a crime, the CPSW:
 - A. Takes minimal facts sufficient to report to law enforcement;
 - B. Reports the alleged crime to law enforcement and work collaboratively with all responding agencies to avoid multiple interviews; and
 - C. Refers to policy 1554 Human Trafficking Response for children thought to be victims of human trafficking.

| Applicable Forms | |
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| Form | Title |
| 1559 | Return of Missing Child Report |

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q1. Where can I get additional support around locating a 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 | | | |
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| PD | Modification Made | Approved | Date |
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