



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

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August 14, 2023

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS,
SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS**

SUBJECT: NC DSS POLICY ON MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN

REQUIRED ACTION: Information Only Time Sensitive **Immediate**

The Division is committed to providing counties with protocol and guidance to support compliance with federal and state law requirements. To ensure compliance with the Federal Requirements for IV-E, new policy revisions were completed in the Intake, Assessments, In Home and Cross Functions Manuals to provide instruction on required actions for title IV-E agencies resulting from the enactment of [Public Law \(P.L.\) 117-348](#) The Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2022. These policy revisions specific to the Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2022 will be effective immediately.

The revised Intake, Assessments and In Home manual changes include:

RESPONDING TO MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN

The Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2022 (Public Law 117-348) requires agencies to report immediately (no later than 24 hours) to law enforcement any missing or abducted children for entry into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

It also reauthorizes and amends the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) to include additional communication and details when title IV-E agencies report missing or abducted children to law enforcement and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

When a report involves a missing or an abducted child, the county child welfare agency must notify law enforcement and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children immediately regardless of the screening decision.

Additional Information that must be shared with law enforcement when known through case search and/or provided by the reporter is outlined in each manual.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Protocol information for each respective manual includes:

Intake

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUPERVISORS

Upon notification that a child is missing or abducted, the supervisor must:

- Within 24 hours, confirm the county child welfare worker has made notification to law enforcement.

The Intake worker must include documentation in the Intake report for any contact information for law enforcement contacted.

Assessments and In Home

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUPERVISORS

Upon notification that a child or youth is missing, the supervisor must:

- Within 24 hours, confirm the county child welfare worker has completed all the required reports and contacts as described above.
- Assist the worker in developing and implementing a plan that contains specific strategies to locate the missing child or youth and assure the child and youth's safety as quickly as possible.
- Confirm that the plan is documented in the Child Welfare Information System record and include weekly activities to locate the child.
- Ensure that the plan is revised, as needed, to ensure progress is made toward locating the child and establishing their safety.
- Meet with the worker on a weekly basis after the initial reporting requirements are completed.
- If the child is high risk, obtain and review weekly progress reports from the worker that include:
 - Ongoing strategies and efforts to determine the child or youth's whereabouts.
 - Contacts with law enforcement and others.
 - Additional steps taken to assist in finding the child.
 - A placement plan for when the child is located; and

Ensure all supervisory meetings are documented in the Child Welfare Information System.

SEARCHING FOR MISSING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In addition to the steps described above, specialized interventions must be considered, depending on whether the child has been abducted, is missing, or is missing with periodic contacts with the family/worker.

Abducted Children and Youth

If the child is believed to have been abducted, the county child welfare services agency's efforts to locate the child must focus on the child's relationship with the abductor and the agency must work closely with law enforcement.

In addition, the following must be completed on a weekly basis:

- Contact law enforcement to both provide and obtain any new information regarding the alleged/suspected abductor.
- Contact the assigned NCMEC case manager; and
- Contact with caretakers and collaterals and others in the child's family or Safety Network to obtain new information on the suspected/alleged abductor and the child or youth.

Missing Children and Youth

When a child's whereabouts are unknown, and/or the circumstances of the child's disappearance are unknown, the county child welfare worker must make a sustained effort to locate the child by contacting the following individuals, agencies, or organizations each week:

- Local police, sheriff's office, or other law enforcement agency working to locate the child or youth.
- The parent/caretaker responsible for the child
- Collaterals and the members of the family's Safety Network

Missing Children and Youth with Periodic Contacts

The county child welfare worker must make every effort to return the child to an authorized placement. In addition to making required contacts listed above, the following information must also be sought from the missing child or youth:

- The child's location at the time of contacts.
- Any information about where they are staying currently or for any period.
- Any information about the individuals that they may be with.
- Information about the health and safety of the child/youth (if parenting, also inquire about the health and safety of the infant or child).
- Whether they are attending school and where.
- Whether they are employed and where; and
- Any contact they have made with family members, friends, probation and parole agents, etc.

If the county child welfare agency confirms that the child is on the registry, there must be communication with the caretaker and collaterals regarding the status of the child's whereabouts at every contact until the child has been located or case closure. This must be documented in the case record. At case decision, law enforcement must be notified of the decision of the agency regarding the case.

Cross Function

Reports to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and local law enforcement agencies should be made immediately (and in no case later than 24 hours) after the agency receives information about missing or abducted children or youth involved with the child welfare system through intake, assessments, in-home, permanency planning, or LINKS services.

Additional guidance is provided in each respective manual but not included in its entirety in this publication.

Sincerely,



Kathy Stone

Section Chief for Safety and Prevention
North Carolina Division of Social Services

Cc:

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CWS-54-23