

# Runaways

## Notification and Follow Up Process

36-16

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### Policy

The Department of Children and Families shall ensure:

- timely assessment of DCF-involved youth served in group care and in foster care who have run away from placement; and
- timely notification to appropriate DCF staff and law enforcement of missing children.

**See also:** [Runaways: Notification and Follow Up Process Practice Guide.](#)

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### Target Population

Children or youth up to age 18 years of age, or 21 years of age for voluntary clients, who reside in foster homes and congregate care programs, and youth who receive funding through the Chafee Grant.

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### Collaboration with Stakeholders

DCF shall collaborate with state and local law enforcement, juvenile justice, health care providers, education agencies and organizations with experience in dealing with at-risk youth, to develop and update policies and procedures (including relevant training for Social Workers) for identifying, documenting in agency records, and determining appropriate services for any child or youth over whom DCF has responsibility for placement, care, or supervision and who DCF has reasonable cause to believe is, or is at risk of being, a sex trafficking victim (including children for whom DCF has an open case but who have not been removed from the home).

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### Notification

DCF staff shall ensure that all children who are missing from their placements are reported to Careline in these time frames:

A Child Who Is	Amount of Time Missing
Under thirteen	Immediately
Thirteen and older (except as below)	One hour
Thirteen and older <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• with high emotional or psychiatric acuity; placed in a psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF), crisis stabilization programs (CSP) or psychiatric hospital;</li><li>• with diagnosed serious medical conditions such as insulin-dependent diabetes that requires scheduled medication and timely monitoring;</li><li>• with prior history of sexual exploitation; or</li><li>• who poses a danger to self, others or the community.</li></ul>	Immediately

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**Assessment of a Runaway Age 13 and Over**

The Area Office or Careline, together with the foster parent or provider staff, shall assess the nature of the absence and the characteristics of the child to determine whether a child who is age 13 or older should be immediately classified as missing.

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**Law Enforcement Notification**

Police shall be contacted immediately when a child:

- is determined by DCF staff, facility staff or foster parents to be a danger to self, others or the community;
- has a history of sexual exploitation; or
- is under age 13.

In all other cases, police notification and requests for intervention shall be at the discretion of DCF staff.

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**Efforts to Locate Child**

When the outcome of a joint assessment of the child's runaway status does not necessitate police notification and intervention, the Area Office staff (during business hours) or Careline staff (after hours and during holidays), shall work with facility staff, foster parent(s) and/or private child placing agency staff to develop a plan to search for the child and ascertain his or her whereabouts.

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**Whereabouts Unknown**

When the child's whereabouts are unknown, DCF staff, facility staff, foster parent(s) and/or private child placing agency staff shall continue to search.

A formal reassessment will be done within three hours, and or prior to the Area Office closing or the next Careline shift change during the child's absence.

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**Knowledge of Youth's Whereabouts**

When there is knowledge of the child's whereabouts, Area Office staff (during business hours) or Careline staff (after hours and during holidays) shall work with facility staff, foster parent(s) and/or private child placing agency staff to facilitate the child's immediate return.

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**Documentation**

Documentation of all activity regarding a child's runaway status shall be entered into LINK within the required timeframes for narrative entries.

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