

Purpose:

To provide procedures for identifying, reporting, locating, and responding to incidents in which a child or Non-minor dependent (NMD) under Probation supervision is missing from foster care. The goal is to ensure youth safety, timely reporting, coordinated search efforts, and comprehensive assessments and support upon the youth's return.

Definitions:

(a) Missing from Foster Care (WIC

16501.35(c)(1)) A child is considered missing

when:

1. Their whereabouts are unknown to the Probation Department; or
2. They are located in a non-approved placement that may pose a risk to the youth, taking into account the age, intelligence, mental functioning, and physical condition of the child.

(b) Missing Non-minor Dependent (NMD) (WIC 16501.35(c)(2))

A NMD is considered missing, based on the totality of circumstances, when:

1. The probation officer suspects they did not voluntarily leave care; or
2. They are at substantial risk of harm.

Immediate Actions and Timelines

(a) Determination of missing

status Upon learning a child is

missing:

1. Assess whether the youth meets the definition of "missing" per WIC 16501.35
2. For NMD's, assess voluntariness and risk of harm
3. Timeline: within one hour of receipt of information

(b) Mandatory Notifications (within 24 hours)

Notify the following individuals/agencies immediately, and no later than 24 hours:

1. Parents/Indian Custodians/Guardians, unless rights are terminated or limited by court order
2. Attorneys for Parents/Indian Custodians/Guardians, if court notification is not limited
3. Child's Attorney (WIC 317(c)/WIC 634)
4. CASA, if appointed
5. Court of jurisdiction
6. Tribe/Tribal Representative, if the child is, or may be, an Indian child
7. Siblings (10 years of age or older), if not contrary to their safety/well-being
8. Local law enforcement
9. Tribal law enforcement, if Indian child is missing

- ▶ These notices shall include contact information for the case carrying officer and their supervisor within the notice.
- (c) A delinquency bench warrant shall be filed with the juvenile court within one business day.
- (d) Reporting to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and Law Enforcement

If a child is reasonably believed to be the victim of, or is at-risk of becoming a victim of Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE):

 1. Report to NCMEC
 - a. Phone: 1-800-THE-LOST
 - b. Online: <https://cmfc.missingkids.org/reportit/Account/LogOn>
 2. Include the following in the report when reasonably possible:
 - a. A recent photo
 - b. Description: height, weight, sex, race/ethnicity, hair color, eye color
 - c. Endangerment information (e.g. CSE risk, medications, suicidal tendencies)
 - d. Tribal name and status under ICWA, if applicable
- ▶ Note: COSS recommends all youth missing from care be reported to NCMEC, regardless of CSE status.

Active Efforts to Locate Missing Youth

- a) Initial and ongoing search efforts

All search attempts must be documented in CWS/CMS contact notes and include:

 1. Contact significant persons in child's life (e.g. parents, relatives, siblings, teachers, attorneys, friends, tribal representatives, education/service providers, and peers)
 2. Home visits to potential locations
 3. Police welfare checks (if necessary)
 4. Social media checks (if authorized)
 5. Consultation with internal Runaway/Missing Youth Liaisons
 6. Searches of public locator databases (e.g. California Missing Child Clearinghouse, NCMEC)
 7. Following up on leads regarding child's whereabouts
 8. Engagement of Tribe (for Indian Children)
- (c) Update search efforts at each status review hearing and case plan update

Special Considerations for Indian Children

- (a) Per ACL 24-18 and WIC 224.1(f)(3):
 1. Notify Tribe within 24 hours of learning the child is missing

2. Collaborate with the Tribe to:
 - (a) Assist with locating the child
 - (b) Plan return and future placement
 - (c) Engage in Child and Family Team (CFT) discussions

Response Upon Return of Youth

When a youth is located:

- (a) Arrange return to placement or alternative safe setting
- (b) Assess the immediate needs of the child/NMD
 1. Offer medical care for injuries, illness, or harm experienced while absent from placement
 2. Evaluate need for mental health services, foster youth services, or law enforcement assistance due to victimization/exploitation, exposure to or participation in criminal activity, substance abuse, etc.
- (c) Update all members of the Child and Family Team and anyone previously notified (Parents/guardians, ICWA Representative, Court, Attorneys, Local LE, etc.) that the child is back in placement or safe, as soon as possible.
- (d) Debrief the youth using the Missing/Runaway Youth Debriefing Tool (Attachment A)
 1. Must occur within 3 business days
 2. Allow youth time to decompress before debriefing
 3. Ideally conducted by a trusted adult of the youth's choosing
- (e) Engage the Child and Family Team to assess
 1. Placement stability
 2. Trauma supports needed
 3. Update case plan and services
- (f) Update Integrated Practice CANS within 30 days if trauma or conditions have changed
- (g) Assess for CSE involvement and refer to services if applicable
- (h) Recall any warrants

If youth refuses to return:

- (a) Attempt face-to-face contact for safety checks
- (b) Hold CFT meeting to explore support options
- (c) Develop a youth-led plan for safe return when ready
- (d) Maintain ongoing supportive contact

CSE Specific Procedures (PC 11166)

For youth identified as at risk of or victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation:

- (a) Document CSE risk/status in CWS/CMS and relevant files
- (b) Ensure appropriate trauma-informed services
- (c) Train all relevant staff in identifying and supporting CSE youth
- (d) Maintain communication with NCMEC and law enforcement post-report

Documentation Requirements

All efforts and reports must be documented in CWS/CMS, including:

- (a) Missing youth alerts
- (b) All notifications (date/time/recipient)
- (c) Search efforts and contact attempts
- (d) Debriefing outcomes
- (e) CSE risk assessments
- (f) Tribe Engagement activities (if applicable)
- (g) Updated case plan and IP-CANS (if required)
- Refer to attachment B for detailed data entry guidance into CWS/CMS