

Missing Children in Care Protocol

Absences and Missing CIC

NOTE: Any child missing/absence under the age of 12 requires an immediate report to law enforcement.

Definitions:

Planned Absences: Routine absences as part of daily activity, home visits, special events and summer camp are examples of planned absences. These absences are approved by the agency.

Unplanned Absences: Unplanned or unapproved by the agency; the CIC is not at placement, however the location of the CIC is known. Unplanned absences may include children and youth who are running (absconding) from placement.

Absent child in care: the whereabouts of the CIC is known, however the CIC is not at placement

Missing child in care: the whereabouts of the CIC is unknown, and they are not on approved leave time.

Endangered Missing child in care: the whereabouts of the CIC is unknown, and risk factors are identified that place the missing youth at greater risk of harm.

Planning for Absences

Refer to agency policy and procedures (see Standard 7 in Section 1.1.3, Planning) and Group Care Facility Standards (see Standard 2.4.3 Absences).

1. Planned Absences – require case documentation of the planned absence including contact information.
2. Unplanned Absences – requires case planning, including a response plan that identifies whether a missing person's report is required, whether a safety check occurs, call to the DIA/agency to report the youth as AWOL, and any required follow-up steps expected by the agency and/or care provider. Whenever possible and appropriate case planning for unplanned absences should involve the youth.

3. Missing or Endangered CIC – requires immediate follow up as per the individual CIC response plan.

Missing Children in Care Response Plan Procedure:

- All children in care over the age of 12 must have a completed **Missing CIC Response Plan** form completed. (Children under the age of 12 and missing result in an automatic/immediate call to police).
- Plans should be reviewed at minimum every three months during 90 day reviews, or as per the key factors to update below.
- Plans should be posted on CFSIS in the CIC file annually at minimum or when updated.
- An updated CIC photo must be available on CFSIS as per standards.
- A copy of the CIC response plan is to be held by the agency and a copy shared with the placement. Copies can be shared with law enforcement when a missing person report is filed.

Key Factors for Updating Response Plans:

- Significant change to the youth's description/appearance or identifying factors
- New or invalid address locations and/or contacts including a change to safety risk
- New or no longer valid risk factors including a significant change to medication and diagnosis.
- Addition of any valid warrants, court orders and/or conditions.
- Any change in role and responsibilities under the plan
- Change in placement

Missing CIC Response Plan Form

Form should include the following information:

- Identifying information and description of the youth.
- Locations:
 - Plan should include any potential address the youth may attend.
 - Contact information of known addresses.
 - Any cautions or safety risks known at the address.
 - Identify any approved or assessed as safe persons/address where the youth may stay until next day follow-up.
- Risk factors identified that jeopardize the safety of the youth when missing
 - Risk factors must be current (within the last 3 month)
- Written plan outlining who is responsible for what actions including checking addresses, and notifications. Plans should obtain information to identify last communication with the youth (type, frequency and with whom), including when they were last on social media.
- Direction on when a missing person file should be called into police.
- A list of individuals to be contacted when the youth is missing, and when they should be contacted.

- Plans to be consulted and agreed upon by placement (specific to role responsibilities).
- Plans are to be dated and signed by the agency/guardian and placement representative.

Considerations:

1. Identifying High Risk Indicators

Placing workers have the initial and primary responsibility for sharing information about the youth with the care provider and other relevant parties at the time of placement and on an ongoing basis. This includes information on high risk indicators as detailed on the Missing CIC Response Plan form.

Factors to be considered by the care provider or agency worker in deciding immediate risk include dangerous environment such as open water, severe weather, nightfall, and appropriateness of dress for prevailing weather conditions, and any high risk indicators as per the form. Risk factors should be current and supported when necessary by documentation.

2. Care Provider and Agency Worker Responses

Plans should outline roles and responsibilities of each party and whom is to be contacted. *The assistance of the police should be sought if the situation is perceived as dangerous.*

Losing Contact with a Child – The primary and immediate care provider initiates an immediate, brief search upon losing contact with a child while on an outing. This may include a local search by car or on foot.

Child Not Returning from School or Day Program – Depending on the child and the circumstances, an immediate search may be required when a child does not return from school or arrive at a planned destination.

Adhering to the Care Plan – Care providers and agency workers should adhere to the response plan for missing children in care.

Concern About a Child's Whereabouts – A care provider should report a missing child to the police and the supervising agency or after hours as soon as there is concern for the child's whereabouts regardless of the time of day or night. This applies when there is no plan in place for whatever reason, the care provider has reason to believe a plan is out-of-date, or specific circumstances suggest a need to depart from the plan.

Note: *It is not necessary to wait 24 hours before reporting a missing child to law enforcement.*

Required Information – On advising the police and the supervising agency of the child's absence, care providers or agency workers, as the case may be, should be prepared to provide information required by the police.

The following information is required by the police to assist in establishing the case as a priority for police action and should be on the Missing CICs Response Plan:

- name, date of birth, age and gender of the child, and description
- personal identity and contact information of the person reporting including who to call in the event the reporting person is not available,
- a digital photo of the child or youth taken within the past year for identification purposes (see Standard 6 in Section 1.7.1, Service Records),
- the time and place where the missing child was last seen and by whom, and information around last contact with the youth via other means.
- if applicable, information regarding the possibility that the child may have left residence jurisdiction or Manitoba and, if so, possible destinations,
- if applicable, the names, addresses and phone numbers of friends and whether they have been contacted (as available on the response plan),
- if applicable, the name of the child's school and teacher and whether the school has been contacted or checked, and
- factors posing an immediate risk to the child's safety as per the risk factors on the response plan.

Note: Reporting a missing child to the police does not relieve care providers and agency workers of their responsibilities to continue searching for the child and updating the police with new information on a child's possible whereabouts. *Updating police when contact with the youth occurs, does not cancel the missing persons report.*