

Absconded or Missing Child Policy & Procedure

Policy Relevant to:

Last Reviewed: July 2019

Next Review: July 2022

NQF Reference: National Law section 174
National Regulations 12, 87

Goal

Ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children in care, as far as practicable
This policy sets out a clear procedure to be followed in locating a missing or absconded child. The objective is to ensure the best outcome for the child. The service will establish and maintain a collegial relationship with Police and emergency services personnel to encourage regular visits to the service in non-emergency situations.

Definitions

Absconded child: A child who has, by choice, left the approved area of the service.

Missing child: A child whose whereabouts cannot be accounted for.

Procedure

Absconded Child

- If a child becomes distressed and threatens to leave the service, a staff member (other than the coordinator) would pursue the child using a mobile telephone to communicate with other staff.
- Keep calm and keep the child as calm and safe as possible (don't run).
- If the child chooses to leave the boundaries of the service, the staff member would stay within the boundaries and watch out for the direction that the child takes.
- The coordinator or other staff member would be advised and would make every effort to contact the parent or emergency contact listed for the child.
- If the parent is not contactable, the Emergency Services will be notified (000). Staff to give concise information regarding location and circumstances surrounding absconding child.
- The coordinator and staff at the service will document the incident on an incident report.
- The child, staff and parents will be engaged with regarding the incident and strategies agreed upon to ensure that the incident does not recur and a search fee imposed where appropriate.
- An absconded child is defined as a Serious Incident in relation to the National Quality Framework and must be reported to the Education and Care Unit within 24 hours of the occurrence.

Missing Child – All Services

- Staff will regularly check that all children are accounted for at the service.
- Should a child be identified as missing, the room or service coordinator will be notified immediately and staff allocated to undertake a thorough search of the immediate area, specifically checking likely hiding places (approximately timeframe of 5 minutes).



Absconded or Missing Child Policy & Procedure

- If the child is still missing, the parents and police (Kingston Police: 6211 8000, or 000) will be notified by the coordinator or Director. Whilst this notification is occurring, all available staff will continue to search the immediate and surrounding areas, whilst ensuring that the remaining children are safe and kept calm.
- Once Police arrive, they will take charge of the incident and staff will follow their direction, whilst ensuring that the remaining children are safe and kept calm.
- The coordinator and staff at the service will document the incident on an incident report.
- The child, staff and parents will participate in discussions regarding the incident and strategies agreed upon to ensure that the incident does not recur.
- A missing child is defined as a Serious Incident in relation to the National Quality Framework and must be reported to the Education and Care Unit within 24 hours of the occurrence.

Missing Child – Arrival OSHC

- Roll call will be taken at the service as soon as practically possible after school finishes and as soon as children arrive at the service. Children will be encouraged to move swiftly to the service as soon as school finishes.
- If a child is absent at roll call, staff will firstly try to ascertain from school staff if the child was at school that day or if they are aware of the whereabouts of the child.
- If the whereabouts of the child is known but the child insists that they are being picked up early by a family member or friend, the Co-ordinator/Nominated Person in Charge will contact the parents or emergency contact person to confirm arrangements. All efforts will be made for the child to join the rest of the group until the situation has been clarified. This may include the child talking to the parents to verify information. The child in question should be closely supervised by a staff member until the issue is resolved.
- If the whereabouts of the child cannot be verified, the coordinator will contact the parents or emergency contact person, whilst another staff member searches the most likely route between the child's classroom and the service.
- Should the child remain missing, the Police will be notified by the Coordinator (Kingston Police: 6211 8000, or 000).
- The coordinator and staff at the service will document the incident on an incident report.
- The child, staff and parents will participate in discussions regarding the incident and strategies agreed upon to ensure that the incident does not recur and a search fee imposed where appropriate
- A missing child is defined as a Serious Incident in relation to the National Quality Framework and must be reported to the Education and Care Unit within 24 hours of the occurrence.
- If the whereabouts of the child is known but the child insists that they are being picked up early by a family member or friend, the Co-ordinator/Nominated Person in Charge will contact the parents or emergency contact person to confirm arrangements. All efforts will be made for the child to join the rest of the group until the situation has been clarified. This may include the child talking to the parents to verify information. The child in question should be closely supervised by a staff member until the issue is resolved.

