 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>155</h1>
Chapter:	Coordinating with Others	
Subject:	Runaway, Abducted, & Missing Children & Youth	Page 1 of 17
Approved:	Aryka Radke, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 5/22/2024
Supersedes:	Family Services Policy 155	Dated: 7/10/2023

Purpose

To:


- Articulate reporting requirements to law enforcement (LE) and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) for a missing child, youth, or young adult with division involvement; and
- Outline the additional steps taken when a child or youth in DCF custody is missing, absent, runaway, or abducted.

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Related Policies

- Family Services [Policy 51](#): Screening Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect
Family Services [Policy 52](#): Child Safety Interventions – Investigations and Assessments
Family Services [Policy 60](#): Juvenile Proceedings Act – CHINS (C) and (D) Assessments
Family Services [Policy 94](#): Foster Care Placements & Collaboration with Caregivers

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Definitions

Division Involvement: A case currently open of any case type: a child safety intervention, family support, conditional custody, custody, probation case, etc. “Involvement” is defined broadly to capture the requirements of 471(a)(9)(C)(i)(I) of the Social Security Act, which includes all young people over whom the division has responsibility for placement, care, or supervision, including those with any kind of an open case file.

Missing or Absent Child or Youth: A child or youth whose whereabouts are unknown to DCF or to the child’s caregivers. Further, federal law ([34 U.S.C. § 11292](#)) defines a “missing child” as any individual less than 18 years of age whose whereabouts are unknown to the child’s parent or legal guardian; this includes children who have gone missing for any reason at all. This definition also includes situations where an emergency care order has been issued and the child cannot be located and/or it is believed a parent or caretaker may have absconded with the child(ren).


The following definitions are sub-categories:

Abducted Child or Youth: A child or youth whose whereabouts are unknown, and it is known or suspected that the child has been taken from their placement or other location by a person or persons either known or unknown to the child, in violation of a valid court order regarding the child’s custody status.

Critically Missing Young Adult: A term used by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to describe young adults ages 18, 19, and 20 who are at an elevated risk of danger if not located as soon as possible due to the circumstances surrounding their disappearance.

Runaway Child or Youth: A child or youth who is voluntarily missing from care. Factors confirming this status may be:

- The child has stated they are running away;
- The child or another party contacts the parents, caretakers, or worker and indicates the child is not returning to their placement;
- The child misses a clearly stated appointment or curfew and the caretaker or worker has reason to believe the child does not intend to return;
- Some or all of the child’s possessions are missing;
- The child has a history of runaway behaviors or patterns and cannot be located.

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Human Trafficking of Minors: A form of child sexual abuse. See **Sex Trafficking of Minors**. In addition to child protection definitions articulated in Title 33, [Chapter 49](#) of the Vermont Statutes, a definition of human trafficking, aggravated human trafficking, and companion definitions of other terms exists within Title 13 (Crimes and Criminal Procedure), [Chapter 60 \(Human Trafficking\)](#) of the Vermont Statutes. Additional definitions pertaining to human trafficking exist within [federal law](#).

Note that the definitions of human trafficking and sex trafficking differ for youth over the age of 18. Exploiting someone through “survival sex” is legally different for children compared to adults.

Sex Trafficking of Minors: A range of crimes committed against children and adolescents, including but not limited to:

- the sexual exploitation of a minor;
- recruiting, enticing, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining by any means for the purpose of sexual exploitation;
- exploiting a minor through survival sex (exchanging sex or sexual acts for money or something of value, such as shelter, food, or drugs);
- using a minor in child pornography;
- exploiting a minor through sex tourism, mail order bride trade, and early marriage; or,
- exploiting a minor by having her/him perform in sexual venues (e.g., peep shows or strip clubs).

Introduction & Legal Framework

Children and youth with child protection or juvenile justice system involvement are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking and its dangerous health and mental health consequences. This and other risks increase dramatically when children and youth are absent and missing from care. They are not developmentally, legally, or socially able to consent or make the “choice” to become involved in the commercial sex industry nor provide sex or sexual acts in exchange for money, drugs, food, clothes, housing, or meeting their basic needs. Risk factors for sex trafficking include a history of abuse, neglect and trauma; low self-esteem and minimal social support; and runaway and homeless youth.

Title IV-E (42 U.S.C. § 671(35)) requires the division to develop and implement specific protocols for ensuring the safety of children, youth, and young adults when they are absent from appropriate care and supervision. Central to this is timely and regular communication with local law enforcement and reporting to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). This includes sharing identifying and contextual information related to the child’s absence and recovery.

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Policy Section 1: Law Enforcement & NCMEC Reporting for All Division Involved Children, Youth, and Young Adults

A report to law enforcement authorities shall be made immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours, after receiving information about a missing, absent, abducted, or runaway child, youth, or young adult with division involvement. Additionally, division staff are required to report to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) within the same 24-hour period.

The division understands and acknowledges that family services workers (FSWs) are not always informed immediately of a youth's location or absences across all open case types. Some information may not be available due to the case type, limited depth or duration of division involvement, or other circumstances. It is recognized that these events are dynamic and the necessary information for determining missing status may not coincide with the actual event. Reporting timelines applicable within this policy begin when information becomes known or is shared with division staff.

If the division becomes aware of a child's absence after-the-fact and the child is no longer missing, no reports to law enforcement or NCMEC are federally required.

Parental Notification/Engagement

Case Type	Requirement
<p>If the missing child or youth is in DCF custody</p> <p>[CC, UC, DC]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The FSW shall notify the child's parents or caretakers as soon as possible, but before the end of the day. ➤ If the child's parents or caretakers are suspected of facilitating or having knowledge of the runaway, or harboring or trafficking the child, the FSW will consult with a supervisor and law enforcement before notifying the child's parents or caretakers. ➤ If the child is receiving a residential treatment level of care, the FSW should consult with the child's clinical team before notifying the parents or caretakers. ➤ CIES is responsible for this task after hours, on weekends, and holidays.
<p>If the missing child or youth is not in DCF custody</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The FSW shall collaborate immediately with the parent/custodian/caregiver in the collection of information required for law enforcement and NCMEC reporting, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A photo of the missing young person; ○ A description of their physical features, such as height, weight, sex, ethnicity, race, hair color, and eye, and color; ○ Known endangerment information;

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[CA, CI, CJ, UY, CF, DY, CS, US, DS, DP]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The circumstances surrounding their absence or disappearance; and ○ Contact information of their legal guardians/caregiver(s). <p>➤ The FSW will work with the family in the context of the existing open case and the division’s obligation to continually assess safety and risk. This includes coordination with the parent/caregiver regarding efforts to locate and stabilize the youth upon their return.</p>
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Reporting to Law Enforcement

A report of any missing child or youth with division involvement shall be made immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours, by telephone to the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction of the town of residence. Local law enforcement is tasked with entering information into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Division staff should confirm with law enforcement partners that NCIC entry has been made.

CIES is responsible for this task after hours, on weekends, and holidays for all case types.

Case Type	Requirement
If the missing child or youth is in DCF custody [CC, UC, DC]	<p>Division staff will report to law enforcement as articulated above. Additionally, the Missing Child/Youth Notification Form (FS-155) will be completed and shared with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law enforcement agency of jurisdiction • Deputy Director of the Vermont Intelligence Center (VIC) (Ronald.LaFond@vermont.gov) • Family Services Division All <p>The following subject line is encouraged: [Secure] Missing Child from _____ (District Office)</p> <p>Detailed protected health information is not shared in this division-wide notification. Health information may be shared in limited circumstances when there is a serious and imminent threat to the health and safety of the youth, which is done through the checkboxes on the Missing Child/Youth Notification Form (FS-155) as opposed to a detailed narrative.</p> <p>Staff should provide law enforcement with instructions to enter into NCIC regarding where the child/youth should be taken when found.</p>

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	<p>Most often, the instruction should be to take the youth to the police station (or hospital if they require immediate medical attention or need to be medically screened) to wait for a division employee prior to returning the young person to their placement. If the child is found with non-custodial parents, NCIC will need instruction on whether the young person should stay at home or be brought to a police station to wait for division staff.</p>
<p>If the missing child or youth is NOT in DCF custody</p> <p>[CA, CI, CJ, UY, CF, DY, CS, US, DS, DP]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Division staff are responsible for reporting to law enforcement and NCMEC regardless of the legal caretaker's actions. ➤ This does not negate the caretaker's primary responsibility to engage with law enforcement in the sharing of information, reporting, coordination of response, efforts to locate, and the plan of care for the child when found. ➤ It is the legal guardian/caretaker's responsibility to provide instructions to law enforcement about where the child/youth should be taken when found. Division staff may offer support and recommendations as needed.


Per [20 V.S.A. § 1823](#), once a law enforcement agency receives complete missing person details from a complainant, statute requires them to prepare a missing person report and disseminate it to the Commissioner of Public Safety, all law enforcement agencies within the jurisdiction where the missing person lives or was last seen, any other law enforcement agencies that can reasonably be expected to be involved in any investigation, any agency to which the complainant reasonably requests the report be sent or those requesting a copy, and all media in the region unless such disclosure would impede the investigation. Legal caretakers and/or division staff may advocate for scope and content regarding these General Broadcast Bulletins.

Further, [20 V.S.A. § 1824](#) requires law enforcement to commence a search as soon as a report is received, and it does not allow agencies to set time limitations on when a search can commence (i.e., 24 hours after someone goes missing).

Reporting to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)

Division staff will report all missing children and youth to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) Call Center at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) within 24 hours of the division becoming aware of a child's absence. CIES is responsible for this task after hours, on weekends, and holidays for all case types.

See [NCMEC's Case Worker Quick Reference Guide](#) for a summary of the information NCMEC will hope to obtain from division staff. [Children Missing from Care: Frequently](#)

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[Asked Questions of Social Service Agencies](#) is an additional resource. The division’s [Missing Child/Youth Notification Form \(FS-155\)](#) is well-aligned with NCMEC’s reference guide and the most pertinent information to gather and report. This form is only required for children and youth in DCF custody; however, it may be a useful guide for staff when collecting information about any young person with division involvement. An [online NCMEC account](#) may be created for reporting missing children electronically, though a follow-up phone call should be expected.

Regarding division-involved children/youth and their parents/caregivers: Information, procedures, and recommended best practices contained within the remainder of this policy can be shared with parents and caregivers as a guide for stabilizing and supporting a child or youth upon their return. Caregivers should be encouraged to follow up with all medical and mental health needs related to the missing episode.


Further, FSWs are encouraged to meet with children and youth as soon as feasible upon their return to follow up on their experiences, assess safety, and make any necessary follow-up reports or referrals to promote safety and well-being. Private conversations individually with youth and caregivers should occur. Organizing a team meeting or network-building meeting may be warranted if run-prevention strategies are needed.

Policy Section 2: Additional Requirements & Ongoing Efforts for Children and Youth in DCF Custody

In addition to the reporting and notification requirements described in section 1, Title IV-E (42 U.S.C. § 671(35)) requires the division to:

- Expeditiously locate any youth missing from foster care;
- Determine the primary factors that contributed to the youth’s running away or otherwise being absent from care;
- To the extent possible and appropriate, respond to those factors in current and subsequent placements; and
- Determine the youth’s experiences while absent from care, including screening the youth to determine if the youth is a possible sex trafficking victim.

As a general practice, the division attempts to identify youth who are at risk of going missing or running away based on their previous runaway behaviors, threats to run, and other overall risk factors. At the time of each placement or soon after placement, division staff provide foster/kinship caregivers with the [Child Information & Placement Checklist](#) to provide known information about the youth, which includes their history of running away.

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Efforts to be Completed by the End of the Business Day


The assigned FSW, with the support of their team as available and applicable, is responsible to take all actions detailed in this policy to locate a child or youth missing from their placement and to document all efforts in case notes. Centralized Intake and Emergency Services (CIES) is responsible for immediate and urgent tasks outlined in this section of the policy after hours, on weekends, and holidays.

Efforts to Locate the Child

Division staff will attempt to ascertain the whereabouts of the child, in conjunction with law enforcement and the Vermont Intelligence Center (VIC), and through contact with family, friends, and other community partners and providers (e.g., school personnel, foster parents, residential staff, or other service providers). Any information gathered should be provided to the investigating law enforcement agency or agencies.

FSWs will determine if there are any endangerment circumstances that place the child at a higher level of risk. If any of the following circumstances are true, the family services worker will inform law enforcement that there is a higher level of risk to the child. Endangerment circumstances that place a child at high risk refer to a missing child who:

- is under 13 years of age;
- is believed to be in an unfamiliar area;
- was missing for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement;
- is in a potentially life-threatening situation;
- is suspected or known to be a victim of human trafficking or there is a concern of exploitation;
- has prior running away behaviors;
- has a life-threatening condition;
- is believed to be with others who could endanger their welfare;
- is believed to be with one or more contacts/strangers found through the internet or apps (online enticement/luring);
- has a suspected, documented, or diagnosed medical or mental health condition;
- has a disability (physical, developmental, intellectual/learning, behavioral/emotional, or sensory impaired);
- is believed to be using substances or impaired;
- requires prescription medication;
- is pregnant;
- is currently at risk of self-harm or suicidal ideation or attempts;
- is absent under circumstances inconsistent with their established patterns of behavior and this absence cannot be readily explained; or

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- disappeared under other circumstances that would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the child should be considered at higher risk.

If it is suspected that the youth ran with their peers or other youth in DCF custody, coordination should occur between district offices and workers. If an FSW reasonably suspects the youth is at a specific location, the worker should notify the investigating law enforcement agency and request that the youth be picked up.

Out-of-State Coordination

If the youth has run away and it is suspected or known they are in another state, the assigned worker will notify and seek consultation from ICPC/ICJ deputy compact administrator. The ICPC/ICJ deputy compact administrator then sends an email with the [Missing Child/Youth Notification Form \(FS-155\)](#) and youth’s photo to the other state’s ICJ designee. This informs them that the youth may be in their state and requests assistance from them in picking up the youth and holding them under the ICJ Compact.

Data Entry


District offices are responsible for data entry to document when youth in DCF custody are missing and when they return. This includes:

- Completion of the [Incident Form \(FS-585T\)](#) by the end of the business day of determining a child or youth is missing. The [Incident Form \(FS-585T\)](#) generates a report/list of all youth missing or on run.
- Updating the [Placement Form \(FS-580\)](#) when the child is missing or on run and again upon the child’s return. When a child has run away or is temporarily absent from a foster home or other placement, payment may continue for up to 15 days if the plan is for the child to return to that placement.

District directors will determine whether staff enter information directly into SSMIS or complete the form and give it to their administrative support staff for entry. CIES is not responsible for SSMIS data entry after hours, on weekends, and holidays.

Ongoing Efforts to Locate the Child

A [High End Placement Meeting](#) may be utilized to pull together a team consultation focused on enhancing safety, locating the youth, and creatively exploring resources and options when a youth is missing or on run. The ICPC/ICJ deputy compact administrator and the deputy director of the Vermont Intelligence Center (VIC) (Ronald.LaFond@vermont.gov) should be included in these meetings if a child is missing. The plan, recommendations, and decisions should be documented in case notes. Important and specific instructions for what to do when the youth is located should be entered as a case note alert.

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The FSW shall maintain weekly contact with law enforcement and the VIC and update them with any new information. At least weekly, the worker shall continue to make efforts to locate the child in conjunction with law enforcement. This may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Contacting the child’s friends and family to request information about the child’s whereabouts and persons with whom the child may be associating;
- Contacting school personnel from the school the child last attended or at other schools the child previously attended if it is believed the child maintains a close relationship with persons at that school;
- Contacting the child’s attorney, guardian ad litem (GAL), and other members of the child and family’s team;
- Contacting the child’s adult probation officer if applicable;
- Contacting any other individuals who are believed to have knowledge of the child’s whereabouts; and/or
- Utilizing social media to search for the missing child and determine a possible location based on any updates they may have posted.


The worker and a supervisor shall formally review all efforts to locate the youth within seven days of the youth’s runaway, and every 14 days thereafter. The worker, supervisor, resource coordinator, and client placement specialist shall discuss plans for the child’s placement upon return to DCF care.

If the worker, supervisor, and law enforcement agree that a press release is necessary (separate from the [Vermont Missing Persons Facebook Page](#)), this will be discussed with the Family Services Deputy Commissioner or designee. The child’s custody status cannot be released to the public. The final decision to issue a press release is made by law enforcement. If a press release is going to be issued, the DCF Commissioner’s Office shall be notified immediately.

If it is suspected that a parent abducted the child, staff should contact the Child Benefits Unit to discuss the appropriateness of accessing the Federal Parent Locator System (Family Services Policy 88). If the parent has a history of domestic violence or intimate partner violence, the FSW should consult with the Domestic Violence Unit.

AMBER Alert (America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response)

Only law enforcement can activate an AMBER Alert. Missing children who have run away from home or their placements do **not** meet AMBER Alert criteria. See the [Vermont State Police Amber Alert Website](#) for more information. AMBER Alert is intended for certain specified, time-critical child abduction cases. The goal of an AMBER Alert is to instantly galvanize the community to assist in the search for and safe

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recovery of a missing child. These alerts are broadcast through radio, TV, road signs, cellphones, and other data-enabled devices.

Stabilizing and Supporting the Child Upon Return

Law enforcement should be notified immediately when the child has been located. Parents or caretakers should be notified that the child has been located as soon as possible, but by the end of the day. Additionally, anyone else who was notified about the child’s missing or runaway status should be informed they have been located as soon as reasonably possible.

Division staff, with the assistance of substitute care providers, will ensure the child’s basic needs are met immediately upon their return from being missing or on run. Basic needs include: safety and protection for the child, emotional support, safe housing, food, personal hygiene, clothing, medical care, and mental health supports.


Medical Care, STI Testing, and SANE Exams

If the division knows or suspects a child has been trafficked, assaulted, or exploited while missing or on run, the child should be taken to the local emergency department for **immediate** medical evaluation as evidence collection can be obtained within 72 hours of the last contact, with decreasing yield as more time goes by. If the child was abused or exploited, it is likely they may be reluctant to disclose everything that may have happened. Full STI testing and a SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) exam are medically indicated; however, the youth’s consent is required.

At a minimum, the child should be offered medical care immediately or within 72 hours. As previously stated, SANE exams require the youth’s consent but should be offered to them as appropriate. This should be offered in a sensitive way that ensures the child understands it is not something they are forced to undergo, but that the benefits are carefully explained to them. Additionally, division staff should use their best judgement regarding scheduling an appointment with the child’s medical home for a wellness exam and follow-up. Geographic distance in the child’s placement should not be a barrier in accessing medical care or seeking an alternative provider. Division staff may enlist the help of victim specialists or make victim services referrals as appropriate.

New Reports of Child Abuse

If the young person is suspected to have been abused or exploited while missing or on run, a report of child abuse must be made to CIES (1-800-649-5285). If the report is accepted for a Chapter 49 investigation, the assigned worker should not speak to the youth about their experiences on run until a forensic interview coordinated with law enforcement occurs. Division staff should coordinate with law enforcement regarding

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the appropriate timing of investigation and/or MDT consultation to support the victim and provide a trauma-informed response.

Post-Run Interviews with Youth

If an investigation is not pending, the assigned worker shall interview the child in-person within seven business days of their return to care and take a photograph of the child at that time. Exceptions to the in-person interview may be made by a supervisor and documented in case notes. Extenuating circumstances, such as medical needs/care or geographical distance, will be documented in case notes. The interview may be conducted in conjunction with law enforcement, and shall be, when the circumstances of the child’s absence are not solely related to running away.

The division’s designated human trafficking consultant (ICPC/ICJ deputy compact administrator) is a resource to staff regarding runaway youth, human trafficking, and planning for federally required screenings/youth interviews following runaway episodes.

The interview shall be conducted in a non-judgmental, non-threatening, comfortable, and child-friendly location when possible. The following topics should be used as thinking prompts; workers should use professional judgement regarding how to ask questions and guide the conversation with the child or youth. Topics workers should cover include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Why did the child leave their previous placement?
- When does the child indicate they ran or left their previous placement?
→ *Division staff should be mindful of whether the timeframe aligns with when they were reported missing by the caregiver or program. Delays in reporting this information may warrant a regulatory response from RLSI.*
- Did the child feel unsafe in their previous placement?
- Did anyone encourage the child to leave?
- Where did the child go?
- What is the first thing the child did after they left?
- What else did the child do while they were gone?
- How did the child have their basic needs met (e.g., housing, food, clothing)?
- Did the child perform any sort of sexual act to meet any of their basic needs?
- Who was the child with, if anyone, while they were gone?
- Did anyone loan or give the child money?
- Did anyone provide the child with expensive gifts or favors?
- Did anyone pressure the child into doing something they did not want to do?
- Did anyone take a photo or video of the child that they were uncomfortable with?

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- Was the child the victim of a crime (including physical or sexual assault) while they were gone? Any affirmative answers should be referred to law enforcement and other service referrals should be considered.
- Did the child engage in any risky behaviors (e.g., substance use, self-harm, sexual activity, or any sexual acts in exchange for basic needs or under the influence of exploitation or coercion) while they were gone?
- Did the child engage in any behaviors that might put them at risk of sexually transmitted infections?
- Does the youth have any new tattoos or branding marks?
- What supports or services would the child like to have to help with any experiences they had while they were away?
- What were the best and worst things about being away?
- Does the child plan to run away again? If so, why?
- Does the young person want to return to their previous placement? Or are they requesting a different placement?
- What can the worker do to help prevent the child from not running away again?

If new information is learned during the post-run interview with the youth, the need for medical care and making a new report should be reassessed.


After speaking to the youth, if information is learned that causes division staff to believe they may have been a victim of sex trafficking while missing or on run, a report of child abuse must be made to CIES (1-800-649-5285). Children and youth under the age of 18 **cannot legally consent** to providing sex or sexual acts in exchange for anything of value, including money, drugs, food, clothes, housing, or meeting their basic needs. Consultation with the ICPC/ICJ deputy compact administrator is required for all trafficking cases.

Other and Special Circumstances

Photographs of Children/Youth and Distinguishing Characteristics

A photograph of each child and youth in DCF custody shall be taken every six months and each time a young person returns after missing or being on run. Photographs should be taken at a straight angle and include the child's head and shoulders to encompass their entire facial features. Photographs of children and youth in DCF custody should be stored electronically and in the child's file. Division staff may partner with the child's parents, foster or kinship parents, residential treatment program staff, or others with a significant relationship with the child to obtain updated photos regularly.

Photographs should also be taken and filed of unique distinguishing characteristics

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(birthmarks, scars, piercings, tattoos, and/or brandings) that are **not** in private areas of the young person’s body. Additionally, youth should be asked if new tattoos have been obtained while missing or on the run. If so, the new tattoos should be photographed if they are not in a private area. If distinguishing characteristics are in a private area and not appropriate to be photographed, the division should attempt to obtain a verbal description of the distinguishing characteristic or tattoo (i.e., on what location on the body and in colored ink vs. black ink).

Cases Involving Custodial Interference

In situations where an emergency care order (ECO) has been issued and the child cannot be located and/or it is believed that a parent or caretaker may have absconded with the child(ren), division staff shall file a missing child report and request NCIC entry. If division staff believe the caretaker has taken the child into another state, NCIC entry is required prior to contacting the other state’s law enforcement.

Out-of-State Runaways Found in Vermont

If a youth from another state has run away and is found in Vermont, division staff in collaboration with law enforcement will first check for any warrants for the juvenile. If the youth has a warrant, they will be brought into DCF custody through the Interstate Compact on Juveniles (ICJ) and placed in a secure setting they are less likely to abscond from (they cannot be placed in a foster home/community setting).

If the situation pertains to a non-delinquent runaway and their parent or guardian can retrieve them within 24 hours, and there is no allegation of abuse/neglect (including human trafficking), the youth can be released to their guardian without further division involvement. If the youth’s parent or guardian cannot arrive in Vermont within 24 hours, cannot be reached, or the youth is alleging child abuse or neglect, then they will be brought into DCF custody through the Interstate Compact on Juveniles (ICJ).

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Appendix I: Additional Resources

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)

1-800-THE-LOST

1-800-843-5678

<https://www.missingkids.org/>

[NCMEC's Case Worker Quick Reference Guide](#)

[Children Missing from Care: Frequently Asked Questions of Social Service Agencies](#)

National Runaway Safeline

1-800-RUNAWAY

<http://www.1800runaway.org/>

Amber Alert

<https://vab.org/amber-alert-program/>

National Human Trafficking Resource Center

1-888-373-7888

<https://traffickingresourcecenter.org/>

The Polaris Project

<https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking>

Vermont Intelligence Center

<http://hsu.vermont.gov/aboutus-vic>

Give Way To Freedom

<http://www.givewaytofreedom.org>

Appendix II: Statutes Related to Missing Juveniles

FEDERAL STATUTES

National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990

The [National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990](#) requires every federal, state, and local law enforcement agency to enter, without delay, reports of missing children under the age of 18 to NCIC.

Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today Act (PROTECT) of 2003 (P.L. 108-21)

The [PROTECT Act](#) extends the requirements of law enforcement to enter the report of a missing 18 to 20-year-old into NCIC without delay and conduct an investigation into the young adult's disappearance.

Suzanne's Law of 2003

[Suzanne's Law](#) requires police to notify NCIC when someone between 18 and 21 is reported missing, as part of the national Amber Alert bill. Further, it ensures that no law enforcement agency establishes or maintains any policy that requires the observance of any waiting period before accepting a missing youth report.

Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006

The [Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act](#) mandates missing child cases are entered into NCIC by law enforcement within two hours of receipt.

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-183)

The [Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act](#) mandates that state agencies "report immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours" information about each missing or abducted child both to law enforcement and to NCMEC.

Bringing Missing Children Home Act of 2015

This is a portion of the larger [Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015](#), that was enacted in May 2015. Among other improvements related to record-keeping, this legislation amended federal law to ensure that law enforcement agencies respond appropriately and coordinate with NCMEC and social service agencies when a child goes missing from foster care.

Savanna's Act

Savanna's Act ([25 U.S.C. § 5701 et seq.](#)) improves the response to missing or murdered Native Americans by increasing coordination among Federal, State, and Tribal agencies, expanding data collection, as well as providing additional grants and resources dedicated to reducing further tragedies.

VERMONT STATUTES

[20 V.S.A. § 1823](#)

Once a law enforcement agency receives complete missing person details from a complainant, state law requires them to prepare a missing person report and disseminate it to the Commissioner of Public Safety, all law enforcement agencies within the jurisdiction where the missing person lives or was last seen, any other law enforcement agencies that can reasonably be expected to be involved in any investigation, any agency to which the complainant reasonably requests the report be sent or those requesting a copy, and all media in the region unless such disclosure would impede the investigation.

20 V.S.A. § 1824

State law requires law enforcement to commence a search as soon as a report is received, and it does not allow agencies to set time limitations on when a search can commence (ex. 24-hours after someone goes missing).

20 V.S.A. § 1827

State law calls on the Commissioner of Public Safety to support all agencies in missing persons cases, and coordinate state and local efforts when needed.

13 V.S.A. § 1311 & 20 V.S.A. § 1825

State law identifies specific requirements for unemancipated minors, including runaways. The state defines a runaway child as: an unemancipated child under 18 years of age, voluntarily absent from the child's residence without the consent of his or her parent, foster parent, guardian, legal custodian, parent lawfully exercising parent-child contact, or other person having legal or physical responsibility for the child (13 V.S.A. § 1311). Reports regarding unemancipated minors, including runaways, are required to be entered into NCIC as soon as they are complete (20 V.S.A. § 1825).