

PLACEMENT

Missing And Abducted Youth

Overview

- This section pertains to children and youth who are missing from foster care. “Missing from foster care,” means when the whereabouts of a child or youth subject to an order of foster care placement are unknown to the Agency. It also means when the Agency has located a child/youth subject to an order of foster care placement in a location not approved by the Court that may pose a risk to the child/youth, taking into account the age, intelligence, mental functioning, and physical condition of the child/youth.
- Once a CWW becomes aware that a detained or dependent youth is missing or is abducted (including FM youth), certain steps, outlined below, must be taken by the CWW to locate the youth, inform the court, parent and attorney, preserve the youth's placement if possible for a short period, and then document these efforts.
- In addition, Division 31 regulations ([31-320.53](#)) require that the CWW confirm and document in the case that the child/youth's whereabouts are unknown once every 30 days from the date of the initial discovery
- Missing/abducted youth are not exempt from monthly face-to-face contact requirements according to state and federal policies - [ACL 09-11](#)

A note on language: The acronym “AWOL,” meaning absent without leave, was first used by the military to refer to a member of the armed forces who leaves their post without the permission of a superior officer. The term crept into common usage in child welfare to refer to occasions when a child runs away from a foster care placement. The acronym is still used to some degree, but the term “AWOL” should not be used in child welfare settings “because the term connotes the subject’s failure to fulfill a duty, and evokes a less urgent response from responders, such as law enforcement, than to say that a child/youth is missing. In reality, when a child or youth’s whereabouts are unknown to those responsible for the child/youth, it can lead to dangerous situations for the child/youth. There may be many reasons why a child/youth goes missing, including, but not limited to their own concerns for their safety in the placement, a lack of relational connection to the care provider, the feeling that nobody cares about them, that nobody sees them, or that they are not a part of something. There may be outside forces that compel a child to go

missing from care, including threat or use of force; fraud or other deception; coercion; the offer or promise of an otherwise unattainable reward, such as money, love, affection, or other incentives; abuse of one's power or the child's vulnerability; or abduction. In the recent past, a child who has a history of frequently running away may have been referred to as "a chronic AWOLer" or as "a runner." It is important to remember that running is a response, not an identity.

Note: Information on this page applies to children/youth under age 18. The contents of this section only apply to a non-minor dependent if, based on the totality of the circumstances, the Agency suspects that the non-minor dependent did not voluntarily leave foster care or is at risk of substantial harm. CWWs must not seek a protective custody warrant for any youth eighteen (18) years or older (including an NMD) that leaves their placement (including a SILP) and their current whereabouts are unknown. A missing person's report with the police should also not be filed solely due to a NMD leaving placement since they are voluntarily in Extended Foster Care (EFC). However, the Department must show the court that the Agency has made reasonable efforts to find the youth whose whereabouts have become unknown.

Note: Concerning youth at the Alameda County Transitional Shelter Care Facility (AC TrSCF) who are neither detained nor dependents of the court, a police report is made but a protective custody warrant is not requested by the TrSCF staff. However, when the case carrying CWW is alerted of the runaway, the expectation is that a protective custody warrant is requested within 24 hours of being notified that a youth is missing.

Cross reference: [Court: Warrants - Protective Custody](#) for procedures for creating and recalling warrants. [AC TrSCF Runaway Protocol](#) for youth who go missing from the Facility.

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Required Actions By CWW

VRU:

510.780.8888

When a youth goes missing or is abducted

If a detained or dependent youth is missing or abducted from a placement or the Alameda County Transitional Shelter Care Facility (AC TrSCF), or a dependent youth placed in the parental home is missing or abducted, the following steps are to be taken by the primary CWW as soon as the CWW learns the information:

- Verify that the caregiver (or the parent in FM) has made a missing person's report to local police. If the youth went [missing from the Transitional Shelter Care Facility](#), this may have been done by facility staff (confirm that an actual missing person's report was filed with police).
- Obtain the following information from the caregiver, parent, or other CWW:
 - When the youth left.
 - The youth's possible destination.
 - The youth's companions and a description of the companions.
 - The youth's type of transportation. Obtain license plate numbers and descriptions, if possible.
 - A description of the youth's clothing
 - This information may be found in the [AC TrSCF Runaway Incident Report Form](#) if the youth went missing from the Facility.
- Notify VRU - use 'youth went missing from placement' (or 'child abducted' if that applies) as reason the placement ended. (This may not be needed if missing from the Facility and last placement has already been closed.)
 - **VRU: 510.780.8888**
- Provide notice, including contact information for the CWW, immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from receipt of information that the child or non-minor dependent is missing from foster care, to all of the following parties:

- The child's, youth's or non-minor dependent's parents or Indian custodians, unless parental notification has been limited or terminated by the court.
- The child/youth's or non-minor dependent's legal guardians, unless guardian notification has been limited or terminated by the court.
- The attorneys for the parents, legal guardians, or Indian custodians unless notification of the parents, guardians or Indian custodians has been limited or terminated by the court.
- The child/youth's or non-minor dependent's attorney appointed pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 317, or Section 634.
- The child/youth's or non-minor dependent's Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), if one has been appointed.
- The child/youth's or non-minor dependent's tribe or tribal representative, if the child or non-minor dependent is, or may be, an Indian child, as defined in Section 224.1.
- Any known sibling of the child or non-minor dependent who is 10 years of age or older and adjudged to be a dependent child/youth of the juvenile court, if such notice would not be contrary to the safety and well-being of that sibling. Notice to siblings shall be provided in a trauma-informed manner.
- The local law enforcement agency, including, if applicable, any tribal law enforcement agency for the child/youth's tribe in the case of an Indian child, as defined in Section 224.1. Note: The police tracking system for runaways does not extend outside state borders. If the youth is believed to be in another state, contact the police department with jurisdiction, if known.
- The court of jurisdiction. Obtain a Protective Custody Warrant and a WIC 339 Arrest Warrant (if the parent/guardian abducted or absconded with the child/youth) as soon as possible from the Juvenile Court. See: Court: Warrants - protective custody

Note: When notices must be sent for an upcoming hearing, if a young person goes missing or is abducted from care and we do not have a current address for them, our practice is to send the notice of hearing to them in care of the young person's attorney. In such situations, the NOHW must be updated to reflect this.

- Report any child/youth who is reasonably believed to be the victim of, or is at risk (definition below) of being the victim of, commercial sexual exploitation immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). When reporting to NCMEC, CWWs should provide their name and contact information (phone and email address), as well as that of

their supervisor. The report can be made, at either <https://www.missingkids.org/cmfc>, or 1-800-843-5678.

As per PC § 11166, the following information will be asked of the CWW when making the report:

- Child/Youth's full name;
- Child/Youth's date of birth;
- Child/Youth's physical description (height, weight, sex, race, ethnicity, hair color, eye color);
- Date and location the child/youth went missing (to the best of your knowledge);
- Name and contact of the investigating law enforcement agency;
- Law enforcement report/case number;
- Guardian information (for dependent children/youth and NMDs, this will be the SW; for all other children/youth, this will most likely be the parent/guardian);
- Endangerment information, such as the child/youth's pregnancy status, prescription medications, suicidal tendencies, vulnerability to being sex trafficked, and other risk factors to the extent such information is released in compliance with other applicable laws;
- Information about whether the child/youth is or may be an Indian child, defined in WIC § 224.1, including the name of the child's/youth's tribe;
- A photo of the missing or abducted child/youth. A global 827 petition authorizes the sharing of the child/youth's picture with the NCMEC (see JV 574 and see also ACL 16-85).

The Agency is to maintain regular communication with law enforcement agencies (including tribal law enforcement agencies in the case of an Indian child) and NCMEC in efforts to provide a safe recovery of the missing or abducted child/youth, including by sharing information pertaining to the child's or youth's recovery and circumstances related to the recovery.

Definition of At Risk for CSE

- A. The youth has a minimum of one of the following indicators:
 - a. Child/youth exhibits behaviors or otherwise indicates that she/he is being controlled or groomed by another person;
 - b. Child/youth spends time with people known to be involved in commercial sex;
 - c. Child/youth's use of internet, cell phone, or social media involves social or sexual behavior that is atypical for his/her age;

- B. Or the youth has a minimum of two of the following indicators:
- Child/youth has a history of running away, unstable housing, including multiple foster care placements, or periods of homelessness including couch surfing;
 - Child/youth has had prior involvement with law enforcement or the juvenile justice system;
 - Child/youth is frequently truant;
 - Child/youth's relationships are concerning, placing him/her at risk or in danger of exploitation;
 - Child/youth has a history of substance abuse, specifically narcotics, opiates, crack/cocaine and amphetamines.

Note: NCMEC is not generally used for non-minors, unless they have been conserved (i.e., due to mental health needs, differing abilities, etc.).

- Investigate any local leads on the youth's whereabouts.
- Update the statewide database with the warrant status. In the Client Notebook (blue section) ID page, check the box labeled “outstanding warrant exists” when you file a warrant for missing or abducted youth. When the youth has been located, and you have the warrant recalled, uncheck the same box in the statewide database.



- Document that the child/youth is missing or abducted on the Address page, which is found in the Client Notebook (blue section). Select the button within the box that is labeled "AWOL" (note: this is the terminology coded into CWS/CMS) or “Abducted”, whichever applies. When the child/youth is returned to placement, select the button within the same box that is labeled "Not Applicable"



- If the whereabouts of the child/youth become known but the child/youth is not returned to placement, the minor's address should be documented in statewide database as a "residence" address type. A note should also be entered into the comment box to document that the minor's address is not a placement. When the child/youth is later returned to placement, this address should be given an end date.



- For all missing / abducted youth, verify the youth's missing/abducted status every 30 days (e.g. call caregiver or other location where youth is likely to be).

If a youth remains missing or abducted

- The CWW is to make efforts on a regular basis, which may vary depending upon the circumstances under which a youth is missing, to try to expeditiously locate the youth. These efforts could include checking with the youth's school, checking with known relatives and close associates of the youth to see if there has been contact, or calling such facilities as a safe house for runaways to determine if a youth has been or is in one of their shelters (even if they will not disclose the exact location). [Services](#) are also available to assist with missing or abducted youth.
- Supervisors shall discuss these efforts with the CWW during supervision.
- If a youth remains missing or abducted, the CWW must confirm and document in the youth's case record ([see next section](#)) that the youth's whereabouts are unknown, and the CWW's efforts to expeditiously locate the youth, at least once every 30 days from the date of initial discovery.

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Active Efforts When an Indian Child is Missing from Care

The [ACL 24-18](#), released in March 2024, provides guidance regarding the requirements to make affirmative, active, thorough, and timely efforts (“active efforts”) intended to maintain or reunite an Indian child with their family in Indian child custody proceedings. As noted in WIC section 224.1(f)(3), “identifying, notifying, and inviting representatives of the Indian child’s Tribe to participate in providing support and services to the Indian child’s family and in family team meetings, permanency planning, and resolution of placement issues,” is a requirement. When a child is missing from care, it is the placing agency’s responsibility to notify and work collaboratively with the child’s Tribe. This includes notifying the Tribe immediately, or no later than 24 hours after the agency has received information that the child is missing from placement, collaborating with the tribal representative on efforts to locate the child, and ensuring that the Tribe is regularly updated regarding the child’s status, particularly when the child has been located, to determine the most appropriate placement, if a placement change is necessary. Engagement with the Tribe may provide additional information to assist in locating the youth. If the Tribe is unavailable or a child is not recognized by a Tribe, the CWW will seek support from the Bay Area Collaboration of American Indian Resources at (510) 208-1870 x315, which is part of [American Indian Child Resource Center](#)

The active efforts to meet such requirements must also be documented in the child's case record, per ACL 24-18.

Document Attempts To Locate Youth In The Statewide Database

The assigned CWW will document, no less frequently than once monthly, as a contact in the statewide database, their efforts to expeditiously locate youth who are missing or abducted from care. The documentation of a youth's missing or abducted status, which must be entered in the statewide database at least every 30 days, is accomplished by entering a monthly contact as described below. [Services](#) are available for youth who are currently or frequently missing, and abducted.

- Enter information as follows in the Service Management Section (orange section) Contacts:
 - The contact must have the status 'Attempted' or 'Completed', depending on the contact's participants. Unless contact was actually made with the youth, a contact including the youth as a participant would have a status of "Attempted". Contacts with others on behalf of the youth should be given a status of "Completed".
 - Start date is the day of entry (and within 30 days of last entry).
 - The child/youth's name must be in the 'Participants' field or a 'Collateral' or previous 'Substitute Care Provider'.
 - Staff person/child, or 'Staff Person/Collateral' or 'Staff Person/Substitute Care Provider' must be in 'Contact Party Type' field.
 - Regarding 'Contact Purpose' and 'Method' (i.e. telephone etc.) - these would be selected as appropriate to the contact.
 - The 'On Behalf Of' field must have the youth's name.
 - Include the following in the Narrative section of the Contact page:
 - Who participated in the contact (identify by full name at least once)
 - What was the purpose of the contact?
 - What actually occurred during the contact (issues discussed, important communication, etc)?
 - Where did the contact occur?
 - When did the contact occur (date and time)?
 - Document the warrant in statewide database, if this was not already done. ([see instructions](#))

See [ACIN I-14-19](#) for recommended practices for youth missing from care.

Recommended Practices For Engaging Youth While Missing From Care

- Reach out to the youth via text, phone, email and/or social media. Remain neutral and focused on their well-being. Be honest, express concern, but refrain from language that is punitive or condescending. Allow youth to have voice and choice in their return, exploring what the youth feels is in their best interest.
- Utilize youth's Child and Family Team (CFT) members to engage and communicate with youth.
- Coordinate communication with the youth's CFT members to ensure the youth does not become overwhelmed by too much communication.
- Create a safe plan for return, broken down by achievable steps, with the youth leading the plan when ready.
- Consider holding a CFT meeting to create the plan for return, encouraging the youth's attendance, conveying that they will not be forced to come into care as a result.
- Assess for safety. Should there be suspicion that the youth is in danger, or at risk for danger, contact law enforcement immediately.

Services Available To Missing And Abducted Youth

Prior to utilizing these referral services, ensure that all other [required actions](#) are completed.

Project AWOL (note: this is the official program name maintained by WestCoast Children's Clinic)

A CWW working with a child/youth who is missing or was recently missing can consider a referral to Project AWOL. It is a service provided by the STAT program of West Coast Children's Clinic. STAT stands for Screening, Stabilization and Transition. The STAT program is a collaborative effort between West Coast Children's Clinic, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services and Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services.

Some children/youth have a difficult time maintaining a stable placement. Their behavior may be difficult for a caregiver to manage or they may run away from their placement. STAT has developed Project AWOL, with two Outreach and Engagement Specialists and two Clinicians who work with the primary CWW to stabilize children/youth in an appropriate living situation. Services include contacting teens who have gone missing from care, assessing the problems that are leading to placement instability; clinical interventions to

address these problems, and linkage to on-going services that will address the child's/youth's needs. Appropriate referrals include dependent children/youth who are:

1. Currently missing from placement
2. Have recently returned from an episode of having gone missing, or
3. Have had 3 or more placement changes within 1 year

Services include outreach to youth who are missing to connect and engage with them; support to assist youth in returning to a stable placement and connecting to appropriate services; and support to youth in maintaining a stable placement and breaking the cycle of placement instability. See this [Program Description](#) for more info about Project AWOL.

How to Refer a Child/Youth to Project AWOL:

1. Complete a STAT referral form.
2. Send the completed referral to Stat_registrations@westcoastcc.org

Staff may contact these individuals for more information about the program: Emily Lathrop, STAT Assistant Program Director at elathrop@westcoastcc.org or Kathy Espinoza, Placement Services Program Manager, espinka@acgov.org.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

For children/youth who are reasonably believed to be the victim of, or is at risk of being the victim of, commercial sexual exploitation, a report about the youth must be made immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours to the NCMEC ([see above](#)). For all other children/youth, the NCMEC is available as a resource described below.

The NCMEC is available to assist 24 hours a day in the search for missing children/youth. NCMEC is prepared to help in all missing child/youth cases, even when a child/youth has been missing for a long period of time, was abducted by a parent and is outside the U.S., or has special needs. The NCMEC's services include:

- Rapidly creating and disseminating posters to help generate leads.
- Rapidly review, analyze and disseminate leads received on their hotline to the investigating law enforcement agency.
- Communicating with federal agencies to provide services to assist in the location and recovery of missing children/youth.
- Providing families with access to referrals they may use to help process any emotional or counseling needs.

How to Refer a Child to NCMEC:

1. Call the NCMEC at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) to initiate the referral
2. Receive referral forms from the assigned case manager at the NCMEC. Determine what additional information is needed, if any, for the referral process.

3. Complete the necessary media and biographical forms received from the NCMEC for the referral and provide any additional information.
 - a. Be prepared to provide a description of the child/youth, including height, weight, sex, ethnicity, race, hair color, and eye color.
 - b. Be prepared to provide endangerment information, including pregnancy status, prescription medications, suicidal tendencies, vulnerability to being sex trafficked, other health/risk factors.

Note: If a picture of the youth is not in the case file (for use in the NCMEC missing child/youth posters), one may be obtainable from the Transitional Shelter Care Facility. A [global authorization](#) from the court authorizes sharing of the photo with the NCMEC. An ex parte is not needed.

Caregiver's Responsibility

The caregiver has a duty to report the missing status of any child/youth to the CWW as soon as he or she is aware that the youth is missing.

The caregiver should telephone the CWW on the case and leave a message if the CWW is unavailable. The caregiver should also notify the VRU and the Child Abuse Reporting Hotline.

In addition, the caregiver is responsible for making a missing person's report to the police. A child/youth abduction should be reported through a 911 call.

Payment

See the [Bed Holds page](#) for more information.

NOTE: If the youth has turned 18 while missing from care, an [FC2-NM](#) application will be needed to maintain/resume funding.

Procedure When Youth Is Located Inside The County

In accordance with WIC § 16501.35 and AB 2108 (2024), when the child/youth is located, the following must be completed by the CWW or their designee:

1. Pick up the child/youth

Note: Ask for help from other staff and/or request assistance from law enforcement when necessary.

2. Notify the parent and/or caregiver and the child/youth's attorney of the child/youth's whereabouts. Notify the child/youth's tribe, if applicable.

3. Document this in the statewide database.

Youth Located Outside The County

Perform the following steps when a youth has been located outside the county:

1. Notify law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the youth is located.
2. Make travel arrangements for the youth's return to Alameda County as appropriate.
3. Notify the parent and/or caregiver and the child/youth's attorney of the child/youth's whereabouts. Notify the child/youth's tribe, if applicable.
4. Document the above information in statewide database.

If the youth has been located **outside of the state of California**, consult with a supervisor to ascertain whether the Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) applies. The Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) is the law that regulates the interstate movement of juveniles who are under court supervision or have run away to another state. ICJ return procedures must be followed if the juvenile left their residence without permission or refuses to return to their residence as directed.

Under the ICJ, there are special considerations for non-delinquent minors who run away across state lines:

- May be released to the legal guardian or custodial agency within 24 hours.
- If held more than 24 hours, the ICJ must be applied.
- Juveniles who have runaway & accused status offenders who are a danger to themselves/others must be held in security facilities until returned.
- The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), which limits detention of "status offenders," specifically allows detention of minors pursuant to the ICJ.

In situations in which ICJ applies, all communication regarding interstate cases must go through the state ICJ Offices. For contact information for ICJ Offices, visit:

<https://juvenilecompact.org/>

Placement Preservation

The AB 2247 requires child welfare agencies to develop, implement, and document in the contact notes of the dependent foster youth's case, a placement preservation strategy to preserve the dependent foster youth's placement prior to making a placement change.

The placement preservation strategy must be documented in the child's case contact notes in the statewide child welfare information system. A CFT meeting may be held to identify and implement best practice strategies or conflict resolution strategies to support placement preservation at the first sign of placement disruption. In the case of an Indian child, the Tribe should be included in these meetings, and information shared with the Tribe indicating that the child's placement is at risk, so that the Tribe can assist with creating conflict resolution and placement preservation strategies prior to any placement changes. The Child and Family Team (CFT) must be consulted in the development of the placement preservation strategy. The CWW should review previous CFT meeting notes to identify any delays or barriers to implementing recommendations agreed to by the previous CFT meetings that may impact placement stability, or a youth meeting their goals and must consult with the CFT to develop additional placement strategies as needed. When a placement preservation strategy is being developed, it is an important opportunity to share information with caregivers and youth about supports available through the Family Urgent Response System (FURS). Through FURS, caregivers and youth can receive 24-hour, seven-days per week, trauma-informed text, phone, chat, and in-person support to help deescalate conflicts, preserve relationships, stabilize living situations, and promote stability. Whenever possible and from the onset of the case, the placement change transition plan should be documented in the case plan goals and reviewed/updated at each CFT meeting. For example, if placement with a pending relative is discussed at a meeting, including this as a case plan goal will assure an easy transition to the relative without a placement preservation requirement under WIC 16010.7(k). Similarly, a placement change is intended to comply with the placement preferences of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). In the case of an Indian child, adding this as a case plan goal can help ensure all parties understand and are participating in the plan to transition the child to the preferred placement.

The placement preservation strategies may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Initiate a strengths-based youth and family-centered CFT meeting to collaboratively develop and implement an individual plan designed to meet the youth and family's needs;
- Apply conflict resolution practices to address conflict and concerns, and discuss solutions;

- Review of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment tool to identify and discuss strengths and unmet needs to guide case planning;
- Review previous CFT meeting notes to identify any delays or barriers to implementing recommendations agreed to by the previous CFT that may impact placement stability or a youth meeting their goals;
- Actively engage or recruit CFT members such as educational and natural community supports, family members, professionals, and other individuals identified by the child/youth or family; and/or
- Make every effort to ensure the timely provision of support services, as deemed appropriate by the CFT, for specific services to support placement stability such as respite services, referral for assessment for mental health services, or wraparound

See All County Letter [19-26](#), [All County Letter 22-100](#), and [All County Information Notice I-13-17](#)

Procedure When Youth Returns To Placement

1. As soon as possible and no later than three business days from the child/youth's return, meet with the child/youth (preferably in-person and in a location that is reasonably comfortable for the youth and sufficiently private) to determine the primary factors contributing to the child/youth being missing from care.
2. Do your best to respond to those identified factors to reduce the likelihood of future incidents of the child/youth going missing from care (see [ACIN I-14-19](#) for strategies to prevent youth from leaving care).
3. Ask the child/youth what happened while they were missing. Determine whether the child/youth may have been a victim of commercial sexual exploitation while missing from care.
 - a. **Note:** It is best to use open-ended questions and avoid blaming or scolding. Let the child/youth know you are glad they are back and that you were worried about them while they were missing.

4. Assess the child/youth's immediate needs.
 - a. Seek medical care for injuries, illness, or harm the child/youth experienced while missing from care.
 - b. Evaluate the need for mental health services, law enforcement assistance due to victimization / exploitation, exposure to or forced participation in criminal activity, and foster youth services for missing school.
5. Assess the child/youth's placement and service needs.
 - a. Determine the need for a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting
 - b. Determine whether it is suitable/safe for the child/youth to return to the last placement
 - c. If return to the last placement is not possible, assess for relative placement options.
6. Explore with the youth alternatives to going missing from care, including developing a safety plan (see [ACIN I-14-19](#) for recommendations for safety planning around leaving placement), utilizing support resources, and or developing a runaway prevention plan.
7. Document in the statewide database within 30 days the activities and information described above.
8. Recall the warrant. See [Courts: Warrants-Protective Custody](#)
9. Update the statewide database with the warrant and missing status. See the [CWS/CMS instructions](#) for more information:
10. In the Client Notebook (blue section) uncheck the box labeled "outstanding warrant exists" on the ID page,
11. Select the "Not Applicable" button on the Address page, and
12. End date the child/youth's "residence" address type, if the child/youth's address was known while missing and this was entered as the child/youth's residence. The new placement information will be documented via VRU
13. Notify VRU when the child/youth is placed.
14. **NOTE:** If the child/youth has turned 18 while missing from care, an [FC2-NM](#) application will be needed to maintain/resume funding.

Placement Considerations For Youth Chronically Missing From Care

The following are placement considerations for the Child Welfare Worker to take into consideration regarding youth who are chronically missing from care:

- Does the home/facility create a sense of physical and psychological safety for the youth?
- Does the home/facility convey genuine caring and support for the youth?

- Does the home/facility support the youth's connections to family and other important people in the youth's life?
- Does the home/facility provide opportunities for the youth to engage in meaningful activities and pro-social positive youth development?
- Does the home/facility foster a sense of community belonging for the youth?
- Is the home/facility able to identify triggers that may precede the desire of the youth to leave and is the home/facility able to use verbal interventions and other strategies to reduce the likelihood that the youth will leave?
- Does the home/facility help the youth to gain or develop skills they will need for the future?
- Is the home/facility able to engage the youth in their own planning?
- Does the home/facility have an established process for welcoming and reintegrating youth when they return from going missing?
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Harm Reduction

The model serves to reduce the impact of risky behaviors over time, as opposed to immediately eliminating those behaviors altogether. In utilizing a harm reduction approach, practitioners (e.g. child welfare workers, probation officers, etc.) and their agency/organization must understand that Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) will likely continue to engage in risk-taking behaviors, such as using substances or having unprotected sex, while accessing services. These actions and behaviors must be viewed through the harm reduction lens and seen as a way for the individual to maintain some control over their life while much of their autonomy has been taken away by their exploiters and even the systems that seek to serve them. It is important to acknowledge that the unsafe behaviors they often exhibit are a result of their trauma and our system failures. Harm-reduction involves promoting self-determination and essentially assisting youth in gaining, or re-establishing, their own sense of power. Harm reduction within the context of commercial sexual exploitation, should address associated behaviors and risk factors that are often present in exploitive situations such as limited resources, unsafe relationships, substance use, risky sexual encounters, or running away, as opposed to focusing exclusively on the exploitation itself.

See [ACIN I-59-18](#) , [ACIN I-28-19](#) & [ACL 20-142](#)

Strategies to consider

Immediate Needs & Well-Being

- Make every effort possible to meet whatever needs the youth identifies, regardless of whether other practitioners may define them as truly “immediate”
- Acknowledge every success, or improvement; however, minor it may seem
- Determine the primary factors that contributed to the youth running away or absent from care.
- Assist youth in navigating resources to meet their own needs to promote self-sufficiency and empower independence.

Safety Planning

- Remember safety planning is ongoing and ever evolving
- Allow the youth to be the lead in creating their safety plan by using solution focused questions to empower the youth
- Clearly identify each agency’s role and responsibilities in creating and implementing the safety plan
- Safety planning should include a location the youth can seek safety at any hour of the day- including non-traditional placements
- Validate the youth’s feelings of anxiety and urges to leave placement
- Acknowledge the youth’s feelings of connectivity to their exploiter, if applicable. (It is less about the exploiter but more about the connection between them and the youth)
- Identify how to maintain safety
 - Who does the youth have a healthy relationship with and how to access more time with them?
- Discuss scenarios in which the youth would utilize their safety plan
- For children/youth who are actively being exploited, safety plans should also include how children may access contraceptives and how they will maintain their physical safety while engaging with purchasers.

Placement

- Encourage the youth’s voice & choice – youth participation in case
- Keep the youth updated on placement process.
- Continuously explore placement options based on how safety can be achieved
 - When “safest” placement option is rejected by youth, consider placement where youth may be least likely to leave and most likely to be engaged.
- Collaborate with youth and caregiver
 - Ask youth who they want to live with regardless of viability
 - Consider what led to the youth's absence from placement

- Assist caregivers in establishing and maintaining limitations and boundaries
- If the youth has Native American heritage, support their connections to their tribal community, engage their family and tribe/tribal representatives in the child and family team (CFT), and help them access culturally relevant services and supports. If the Tribe is unavailable or a child is not recognized by a Tribe, the CWW will seek support from the Bay Area Collaboration of American Indian Resources at (510) 208-1870 x315, which is part of [American Indian Child Resource Center](#)
- Make every effort possible to locate, produce, and provide youth with their belongings as quickly as possible.
 - AVOID assuming youth will leave placement again.
 - RECOGNIZE that a youth's identity is often tied to their possessions.

Coordinated Response / Teaming

- Maintain Boundaries While being accountable – be available when you say you will be.
- Remind youth of their safety plan and who to contact when the CWW is not available
- Communicate with relevant staff about the safety plan and youth's potential triggers.
- Use open communication as appropriate.
- Use a multi-disciplinary team approach.
- "WARM HAND OFF"
- **Other Strategies**
- Identify what needs the exploitive situation may be meeting for the youth.
- Recognize and acknowledge that their exploitive situation does not define them.
- Ensure totality of the youth's needs are met, not just needs related to exploitation
 - (Ex: healthy/supportive relationships, personal supports, youth interests, etc.)
- Create normalcy by encouraging age-appropriate activities and interactions.
- Reduce barriers to supports and services that the youth has identified as helpful.

Alameda County Transitional Shelter Care Facility Runaway Protocol

During Normal Business Hours

Step 1: When a minor is missing from the Alameda County Transitional Shelter Care Facility (AC TrSCF), facility staff will immediately verbally inform County staff. The

designated County staff member to receive the runaway notification during normal business hours is the CWS assigned to Placement that day. Facility staff will provide the name of the missing minor and time of the departure.

Step 2: The CWS assigned to Placement will then notify the CWW assigned to Placement of the missing minor on their caseload and the following steps will be completed:

- a. The CWW assigned to Placement will immediately notify the assigned primary CWW that the minor went missing from the AC TrSCF by telephone and/or email, including leaving a voicemail if the primary CWW does not answer the call. If the CWW assigned to Placement is not available, the CWS assigned to Placement that is assigning will complete the task immediately.
- b. The CWW assigned to Placement will input a contact into the minor's referral/case in the statewide database documenting the missing youth incident. If the CWW assigned to Placement is not available, the CWS assigned to Placement that is assigning will complete the task immediately.
- c. The primary CWW will notify the parent or primary caretaker of the minor that the minor has gone missing **within 2 hours** of the departure and enter a contact note in the statewide database. If the primary CWW is not available, the primary CWS will notify the parent or primary caretaker that the minor has gone missing **within 2 hours** of the departure and enter a contact note in the statewide database. Notify the child/youth's tribe, if applicable.

Step 3: The missing youth incident will be documented in the daily "AC TrSCF Wrap Up" prepared by the CWS assigned to Placement that the minor went missing from the AC TrSCF and the AC TrSCF Runaway Protocol was completed.

Step 4: After notification to County staff of the missing youth incident, Facility staff will fill out the MUPS form and AC TrSCF Runaway Incident form and scan and email the forms to Law Enforcement. Facility staff will then call Law Enforcement to inform them that a missing youth incident has occurred, and confirm that the forms have been submitted. Law enforcement will then create a Call for Service and dispatch a patrol officer (or modified duty officer) to respond to the Police Department.

Once at the Police Department, a patrol officer will access the inbox and retrieve the two forms. Once they have been completed by the officer, the officer will reply to the sender that they are "Confirming receipt" and provide the sender with the police report number. Once the officer ensures the Runaway Incident has been entered into MUPS, completes their report (and confirms an area check for the missing youth incident was duplicated by Law Enforcement), the report can be submitted to their supervisor for approval.

Step 5: Facility staff will provide their completed portion of the AC TrSCF *Runaway Incident Report* to the Program Manager assigned to Placement and Division Director by email.

Step 6: The Program Manager assigned to Placement and/or their designee will submit the LIC624LE form(s) to CCL at the email SBIRCR@DSS.ca.gov providing notification of the runaway from the AC TrSCF.

Step 7: Should the minor return to the AC TrSCF from running away, Facility staff will inform the CWS assigned to Placement that the minor returned. The CWS assigned to Placement will notify the primary CWW, primary CWS, primary Program Manager and the Program Manager assigned to Placement that the minor returned. The primary CWW will notify the parent or primary caretaker that the minor returned to the AC TrSCF from running away as soon as possible. Notify the child/youth's tribe, if applicable. If the primary CWW is not available, the primary CWS will complete the task immediately.

Runaway Protocol During Swing Shift (5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)

Step 1: When a minor runs away from the AC TrSCF, Facility staff will immediately verbally inform County staff. The designated County staff member to receive the missing youth incident notification during swing shift operations is the Swing Shift Intake CWS. Facility staff will provide the name of the missing minor and time of their departure.

Step 2: The Swing Shift Intake CWS will send a Runaway Notification email to the primary CWW, the primary CWS and the primary Program Manager before the end of the shift and document the name of the minor, DOB, the date of missing youth incident, and the time of departure from the AC TrSCF.

Step 3: Upon receipt of the email, the primary CWW will immediately notify the parent or primary caretaker of the minor's missing status no later than **within 24 hours** of the minor running away from the AC TrSCF and enter a contact note in the statewide database. If the primary CWW is unavailable to complete the notification, the primary CWS will ensure that this task is completed timely. If the primary CWS is unavailable, the primary Program Manager will complete the task. Notify the child/youth's tribe, if applicable.

Step 4: The Swing Shift Intake CWS will complete the "Swing Intake Wrap-Up" and will note that the minor went missing, the date and the time of the departure.

Step 5: After notification to County staff of the missing youth incident, Facility staff will fill out the MUPS form and AC TrSCF Runaway Incident form and scan and email the forms to Law Enforcement. Facility staff will then call Law Enforcement to inform them that a missing youth incident has occurred and confirm that the forms have been submitted. Law enforcement will then create a Call for Service and dispatch a patrol officer (or modified

duty officer) to respond to the Police Department. Once at the Police Department, a patrol officer will access the inbox and retrieve the two forms. Once they have been completed by the officer, the officer will reply to the sender that they are "Confirming receipt" and provide the sender with the police report number. Once the officer ensures the Runaway Incident has been entered into MUPS, completes their report (and confirms an area check for the missing youth incident was duplicated by Law Enforcement), the report can be submitted to their supervisor for approval.

Step 6: Facility staff will provide their completed portion of the AC TrSCF *Runaway Incident Report* to the Program Manager assigned to Placement and Division Director by email.

Step 7: The Program Manager assigned to Placement and/or their designee will submit the LIC624LE form(s) to CCL at the email SBIRCR@dss.ca.gov providing notification of the missing youth incident from the AC TrSCF.

Step 8: Should the minor return back to the AC TrSCF from being missing, Facility staff will inform the Swing Shift Intake CWS that the minor returned. The return information will be included in the "Swing Intake Wrap-Up" (noting time minor went missing and noting the time that the minor returned).

Step 9: The Swing Shift Intake CWS will email the primary CWW, primary CWS, and the primary Program Manager if the minor returns from running away and note the time that the minor has returned.

Step 10: Upon receipt of the email, the primary CWW will notify the parent or primary caretaker that the minor returned to the AC TrSCF from running away as soon as possible. If the primary CWW is not available, the primary CWS will complete the task immediately. Notify the child/youth's tribe, if applicable.

Runaway Protocol After-Hours (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.), Weekends & Holidays

Step 1: When a minor has gone missing from the AC TrSCF, Facility staff will immediately verbally inform County staff. The designated County staff member to receive the missing youth incident notification during after-hours operations is the CWS on standby/callback. Facility staff will provide the name of the missing minor and time of the departure. The CWS on standby/callback will alert the Program Manager on standby/callback and document status on the on-call Standby/Call-Back Supervisor Log.

Step 2: The CWS on standby/callback will notify the CWW assigned to Placement on standby/callback that the minor went missing from the AC TrSCF.

Step 3: The CWW assigned to Placement on standby/callback will immediately notify the primary CWW that the minor went missing from the AC TrSCF by telephone and/or email,

including leaving a voicemail. If the CWW assigned to Placement on standby/callback is not available, the CWS on standby/callback will complete the task immediately.

Step 4: The CWW assigned to Placement on standby/callback will input a contact into the minor's referral/case (if available in the statewide database) or document the missing youth incident on their log. If the CWW assigned to Placement on standby/callback is not available, the CWS on standby/callback will complete the task immediately.

Step 5: The CWW assigned to Placement on standby/callback will notify the parent or primary caretaker that the minor has run away **within 2 hours** of the runaway and enter a contact in the statewide database (if available) or document on their log. If the CWW assigned to Placement on standby/callback is not available, the CWS on standby/callback will notify the parent or primary caretaker that the minor ran away **within 2 hours** of the departure and enter a contact in the statewide database (if available) or document on their log. Notify the child/youth's tribe, if applicable.

Step 6: The missing youth incident will be noted in the daily "AC TrSCF Wrap Up" that a minor went missing from the AC TrSCF and all referenced parties have been notified according to the AC TrSCF Runaway Protocol.

Step 7: After notification to County staff of the runaway, Facility staff will fill out the MUPS form and AC TrSCF Runaway Incident form and scan and email the forms to Law Enforcement. Facility staff will then call Law Enforcement that a missing youth incident has occurred and confirm that the forms have been submitted. Law enforcement will then create a Call for Service and dispatch a patrol officer (or modified duty officer) to respond to the Police Department. Once at the Police Department, a patrol officer will access the inbox and retrieve the two forms.

Once they have been completed by the officer, the officer will reply to the sender that they are "Confirming receipt" and provide the sender with the police report number. Once the officer ensures the Runaway Incident has been entered into MUPS, completes their report (and confirms an area check for the missing youth incident was duplicated by Law Enforcement), the report can be submitted to their supervisor for approval.

Step 8: Facility staff will provide their completed portion of the AC TrSCF *Runaway Incident Report* to the Program Manager assigned to Placement and Division Director by email.

Step 9: The Program Manager assigned to Placement and/or their designee will submit the LIC624LE form(s) to CCL at the email SBIRCR@DSS.ca.gov providing notification of the missing youth incident from the AC TrSCF.

Step 10: Should the minor return to the AC TrSCF from running away, Facility staff will inform the CWS on standby/callback that the minor returned. That information will be included on the AC TrSCF Wrap Up.

Step 11: The CWS on standby/callback will notify the Program Manager on standby/callback that the minor returned.

Step 12: The CWW assigned to Placement on standby/callback will notify the parent or primary caretaker that the minor returned to the AC TrSCF from running away as soon as possible. If the CWW assigned to Placement on standby/callback is not available, the CWS on standby/callback will complete the task immediately. Notify the child/youth's tribe, if applicable.