

<b>Child Protection Act R.S.P.E.I 1988, Cap. C-5.1</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Children in Care</b>	
	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Child Missing or Absent Without Permission from Residential Services</b>	<b>Policy #2.6</b>
<b>Effective Date: October 31, 2011</b>		<b>Authorized by: Carol Anne Duffy</b>	
<b>Revised Date: May 23, 2014</b>		<b>Deputy Minister</b>	

## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The Director of Child Protection is responsible for the protection and safety of all children in the permanent and temporary custody and guardianship of the Director of Child Protection. Staff of Residential Services must assess the vulnerability and risk factors for children in care who are missing or absent without permission and take appropriate action to ensure the child is located.

## **2.0 POLICY STATEMENT**

- 2.1 The Director of Child Protection recognizes the importance for children in care residing in group care, as provided by Residential Services, to have flexible living environments that promote emotional and social development.
- 2.2 Peer interactions are an important component of healthy child development and children will seek out opportunities to be with peers. The Director of Child Protection, in partnership with Residential Services, is responsible to ensure children in care have opportunities to participate in activities with peers in a manner as safe as possible.
- 2.3 The Director of Child Protection and Residential Services promote peer interactions within a structured environment that considers the needs of all children in the home while creatively maximizing available resources.
- 2.4 In the event, without the permission of Residential Services, the child leaves the group home or does not return to the group home at the expected time, the child will be considered to be missing or absent without permission.
- 2.5 The Director of Child Protection recognizes the importance of responding through least intrusive actions to locate children missing or absent without permission prior to implementing intrusive actions, except in a high risk or emergency situation.
- 2.6 ***In high risk or emergency situations requiring immediate action or remedy due to imminent risk of harm to self and/or others, the on-shift staff of Residential Services will immediately call Police to request assistance to protect life and locate the child.***

2.7 On-shift staff of Residential Services will make effort to locate the child to include but not limited to:

- search building, grounds and surrounding area
- contact and/or attend places child is known to frequent, as appropriate
- contact other group homes as appropriate
- contact parent and / or extended family and others e.g. friends, teacher, etc, who may have knowledge of the child's whereabouts
- call and/or text child, if applicable
- check social media sites child frequents e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.

2.8 On-shift staff Residential Services will assess the vulnerability of the child to include but not limited to:

- age
- physical health / medical issues
- precipitating event
- cognitive functioning / developmental delays
- psychological condition
- suicidal history / ideation
- uncharacteristic behaviour
- ability to care for self
- streetwise / social skills
- sexual activity / exploitation
- history of high risk behaviour
- physical impairments
- addictions
- criminal involvement
- milestones / anniversaries / birthdays
- familiarity with the location
- known contacts or associates

2.9 On-shift staff of Residential Services will assess risk factors to include but not limited to:

- current and forecasted weather
- geographic location
- known hazards e.g. water, traffic
- child's means of transportation
- time of day
- weapons

2.10 In situations assessed by on-shift staff of Residential Services to be non-emergency, on-shift staff of Residential Services will continue reasonable efforts to locate the child while reassessing risk. The on-shift staff of Residential Services will send an email notification to the Child Protection Social Worker, the Child Protection Supervisor and the group home Supervisor to advise the child is missing or absent without permission. In the event the child contacts Residential Services, all efforts will be made to engage the child and persuade the child to return and /or develop a safety plan.

2.11 In situations where on-shift staff of Residential Services have been unsuccessful in locating the child and/or there has been a change in the assessment of the child's vulnerability and risk factors, and/or there has been no contact with the child for twelve (12) hours, the on-shift staff of Residential Services will consult with the Child Protection Social Worker for the child, or the Child Protection Social Worker's Supervisor. The purpose of the consultation will be to determine a plan of action. If this occurs during regular business hours, the plan will be documented in the group home log book as direction to staff and in the After Hours Emergency Service Kit.

In situations where on-shift staff of Residential Services have been unsuccessful in locating the child and/or there has been a change in the assessment of the child's vulnerability and risk factors, and/or there has been no contact with the child for twelve (12) hours, and it is after regular business hours, the on-shift staff of Residential Services will contact the After Hours Emergency Child Protection Social Worker for the office where the child receives services to consult and determine a plan of action.

For both of the above situations, the on-shift staff of Residential Services will contact Police to advise the child is missing or absent without permission and will provide Police with a physical description of the child and an electronic photo, if available, and request Police to advise Residential Services if they become aware of the child's whereabouts.

2.12 In situations where on-shift staff of Residential Services have been unsuccessful in locating the child and/or there has been a change in the assessment of the child's vulnerability and risk factors, and/or there has been no contact with the child for twenty-four (24) hours, the on-shift staff of Residential Services will contact Police to report the child as a missing person. The on-shift staff of Residential Services will send an email notification to the Child Protection Social Worker for the child, the Child Protection Supervisor, the group home Supervisor, and the Director of Child Protection.

2.13 Upon receipt of notification that an aboriginal child in care is considered a missing person, the Director of Child Protection may notify the Designated Representative of the Band for the child.

## **Media Release and Public Notification of Child Identity**

- 2.14 When a Child Protection Social Worker, in consultation with the Child Protection Supervisor, determines that a child is missing or absent without permission, and the child has been assessed as high risk and efforts to locate have been unsuccessful, a recommendation will be made by the Child Protection Supervisor for a media release and public notification of the child's identity. For children in the temporary custody and guardianship of the Director of Child Protection, the parent(s) will be advised of the potential media release and public notification.

For children in the temporary custody and guardianship of the Director of Child Protection, the Child Protection Supervisor will forward the request to the Provincial Coordinator of Child Protection Services for review and approval before forwarding to the Director of Child Protection for consideration.

For children in the permanent custody and guardianship of the Director of Child Protection, the Child Protection Supervisor will forward the request to the Director of Child Protection for consideration.

- 2.15 For After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service, the Child Protection Social Worker will contact the Director of Child Protection directly.
- 2.16 Upon approval by the Director of Child Protection, the Child Protection Social Worker will contact Police to make the request. Police will assess and determine if the request for media release and public notification of child's identity will be authorized. This decision is solely at the discretion of Police.

For children in the temporary custody and guardianship of the Director of Child Protection, upon confirmation of the Police decision to issue a media release and public notification of child's identity, the Child Protection Social Worker will advise the Child Protection Supervisor, the Provincial Coordinator Child Protection Services and the Director of Child Protection. The Child Protection Social Worker will also notify Residential Services and the child's parent(s).

For children in the permanent custody and guardianship of the Director of Child Protection, upon confirmation of the Police decision to issue a media release and public notification of child's identity, the Child Protection Social Worker will advise the Child Protection Supervisor and the Director of Child Protection. The Child Protection Social Worker will also notify Residential Services and, as appropriate, members of the child's birth family.

- 2.17 For After Hours Emergency Child Protection Services, the Child Protection Social Worker will contact the Director of Child Protection directly.

- 2.18 Pursuant to the *Child Protection Act*, no information will be provided to the public identifying the child as a child receiving Child Protection Services, a child in the care of the Director of Child Protection or a child residing in a residential placement. The Child Protection Social Worker will provide a concise description for Police use to include: name, gender, height, weight, eye color, hair color, distinctive features e.g. birth marks, tattoos, clothing at last sighting, and general location and date of last sighting.

### **Canada Wide Alert**

- 2.19 When a Child Protection Social Worker, in consultation with the Child Protection Supervisor, determines that a child is missing or absent without permission and may have left the province, a recommendation will be made to the Director of Child Protection for authorization of a Canada Wide Alert. Prior consultation with the Provincial Coordinator of Child Protection Services is required for children in the temporary custody and guardianship of the Director of Child Protection. The Director of Child Protection will request that a Canada Wide Alert form be completed by the Child Protection Social Worker and forwarded to the Director of Child Protection for action.
- 2.20 For After Hours Emergency Service, the Child Protection Social Worker will contact the Director of Child Protection directly.

### **Child Located**

- 2.21 Upon confirmation that a child has been located and/or returned to the group home, the on-shift staff of Residential Services will send an email notification to all persons who have been previously notified. The on-shift staff of Residential Services will make telephone contact with the parent(s), and Police if involved, to advise the child has been located and/or returned.
- 2.22 When the child is an aboriginal child, the Director of Child Protection may notify the Designated Representative of the Band the child has been located and/or returned to the group home.
- 2.23 The on-shift staff of Residential Services will determine the circumstances and reasons for the child's absence and assess if there are continued risks of vulnerability based on how the child presents. Suspected alcohol and/or drug use will be assessed based on level of intoxication and presenting symptoms.
- 2.24 If the on-shift staff of Residential Services determine the child requires additional assessment, the on-shift staff of Residential Services will arrange for the transportation of the child to a hospital and notify the Child Protection Social Worker for the child during business hours or the After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service after business hours.

- 2.25 If the on-shift staff of Residential Services determines the child may present risk to other children in the home, the on-shift staff of Residential Services will consult a Residential Supervisor or the Provincial Coordinator of Residential Services to mitigate risk in the group home.
- 2.26 In the event a child has been missing and /or absent without permission for a period in excess of twenty four (24) hours, the Child Protection Social Worker for the child will meet with the child directly within two (2) business days of the child's return to the group home to discuss the child's absence and address identified issues.
- 2.27 In the event of reoccurring absences, the Child Protection Social Worker, in consultation with the Child Protection Supervisor, Provincial Coordinator of Child Protection Services (for children in the temporary custody and guardianship of the Director of Child Protection) and Residential Services, will develop a response plan to be reviewed with the child. This plan will be provided in writing to the group home, the Director of Child Protection and a copy will be placed on the child's file and in the After Hours Emergency Service Kit for the office where the child receives service.

### **3.0 REFERENCES**

After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service 1.11

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#### **HISTORY:**

- April 2, 2012 - Editorial and format changes
- November 1, 2013 - Editorial and format changes; clarity of roles, responsibilities and enhanced decision making for Residential Services staff; policy specific to Residential Services to replace former Child in Care - Child Absent Without Permission policy 2.6 that referenced caregivers to include Foster Parents and Residential Services staff
- May 23, 2014 - Removed the word "constantly" in 2.10 from "constantly reassessing risk" to "reassessing risk"