

# S-214 RUNAWAY AND MISSING CHILDREN/YOUTH IN PLACEMENT



*In this document, the non implicit gender applies to both men and women.*

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(previously SE-15)

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## **Policy**

Valoris must know the whereabouts of children and youths entrusted to its care at all times. Staff members must follow provincial guidelines when searching for and attempting to locate children/youths immediately after they are reported missing.

Running away is usually a symptom of a child's/youth's discontent with or difficulty adapting to placement. Staff and foster parents must discuss the reasons with the child/youth upon his return.

## **Procedure**

### **1. Runaway or missing children under 16**

When a child under 16 placed with a foster family is absent from home without their permission and does not come home at the expected time or to sleep, the supervisor must be informed and consulted immediately. The foster parents and the Child Welfare Worker must begin looking for him, taking his habits and social relationships into account. The Child Welfare Worker who received the information or the child's welfare worker must:

- immediately report his disappearance to the police jointly with the foster parents. A photo of the child may be given to the police at their request. The first responsibility of the Child Welfare Worker receiving the information is to ensure that the running away/absence is reported to the police. This may also be the foster parents' responsibility. The Child Welfare Worker shall document any actions taken in his intervention notes;
- immediately advise the parents or legal guardians of the child's absence when he is under PRSCA care under a temporary care agreement or a temporary wardship;
- inform his probation officer if a child is a young offender on probation;
- prepare a serious incident report for the Ministry, within the prescribed time, in accordance with Policy and Procedure DG-10: Reporting of serious incidents to the Ministry.

### **2. Runaway or missing young persons 16 or over**

When a young person aged 16 or over placed with a foster family is absent from the home without permission for less than 24 hours, the foster parents must advise Valoris. The Child Welfare Worker and the foster parents shall jointly determine how **serious** the situation is. The supervisor must be informed and consulted immediately. If the situation is deemed to be serious, the police must be advised immediately.

The following circumstances must be evaluated:

- The young person's age;
- Any physical and/or mental handicaps;
- Possibility of suicide;
- The young person's propensity to stay out late without notice;
- Possibility the young person has been kidnapped or contacted by his family without authorization;
- The young person is a ward of the Crown;
- The young person does not come home when he should in the evening or at night;
- The young person poses a danger to himself and/or others.

When a young person aged 16 or over placed with a foster family is absent from the home without permission for more than 24 hours, the supervisor must be informed and consulted immediately. The Child Welfare Worker who received the information or the young person's welfare worker or as well the foster parent must:

- immediately report the disappearance to the police. A photo of the young person may be given to the police at their request. The first responsibility of the Child Welfare Worker receiving the information is to ensure that the running away/absence is reported to the police. The Child Welfare Worker shall document any actions taken in his intervention notes;
- immediately advise the parents or legal guardians of the young person's absence when he is under Valoris' care under a temporary care agreement or a temporary wardship;
- inform his probation officer if a young person is a young offender on probation;
- prepare a serious incident report for the Ministry, within the prescribed time, in accordance with Policy and Procedure S-108: Reporting Serious Occurrences to the Ministry.

### **3. External resources**

In the case of runaway or missing children placed in an external residential resource such as a foster home, a group home or a residential treatment center, the external establishment shall be responsible for reporting their disappearance to the police, preparing a serious incident report for the Ministry and advising us immediately, no matter how long a child is absent or missing.

The Valoris Child Welfare Worker shall be responsible for obtaining a copy of the serious incident report made to the Ministry by the external resource.

### **4. Identification**

It is important to obtain a photo of each child/youth each year to be kept in their file and to keep the current address of young people living independently on file.

### **5. Youth - Young adults in the Independence Program**

This procedure also applies to youths and young adults placed under Valoris' care living in a foster home or independently who are reported absent or missing.

### **6. Follow-up in cases of prolonged absences deemed to be serious**

The Director of Service must be informed of the disappearance of any child who is not found within a reasonable time. If appropriate, the Director of Service may meet with

the child welfare workers, supervisors, foster parents and other persons involved to draw up a search plan. The police should be invited to this meeting.

The child's welfare worker shall document the holding of this meeting in his intervention notes.

**7. Follow-up with children/youths/parents**

Upon a child's/youth's return, the Child Welfare Worker must meet with him to discuss his reasons for running away and the consequences of his actions, if applicable.

When runaway behaviour becomes habitual, an intervention plan must be included in the plan of care spelling out what is expected of the child/youth and measures to be taken.

If a member of a child's/youth's family of origin is responsible for his unauthorised absence, that situation must be discussed with that person. The Child Welfare Worker may send that person a letter informing him of the consequences of his actions or take more serious legal measure, including warnings or charges under the CFSA.

**8. Return of a child/youth**

Once a child/youth is found or returns under the responsibility of the foster family or the external residential resource, they must immediately advise the other parties involved: police, Child Welfare Worker, parents, foster parents, the Department.

**9. Documentation**

If a child is absent for more than 24 hours, the Child Welfare Worker shall complete an electronic placement activity sheet to inform Administration of his departure and return to his foster family or other residential resource.

The serious incident report made to the Ministry shall be placed in the child's/youth's file.

**Definitions, annexes and references**

**Definition**

**Parents:** Includes biological parents, adoptive parents, step-mother, step-father or all other persons responsible for the child previous to Valoris' involvement.

**Annex**

- Serious occurrence report to be made to the Ministry

**References**

- Provincial guidelines (1990) of the Ministry of Community and Social Services on runaway situations with children placed with Children's Aid Societies (see *Provincial Guidelines for Reporting and Apprehension of Runaways*).
- S-108: Reporting Serious Occurrences to the Ministry.