



**State of Tennessee**  
**Department of Children's Services**

**Providers and Contract Agencies Protocol for Runaway  
Children/Youth**

**Supplemental to Policy 31.2, Responsibilities Regarding Runaways, Absconders and  
Escapees**

Providers and Contract Agencies will work diligently to prevent children from running away from placement. [CS-0910, Confirmation of Review of Runaway Prevention Plan](#), on the DCS website for providers, contains guidelines for treatment of youth, incoming youth, and return of a youth to placement after a runaway event. Providers and Contract Agencies must demonstrate proactive leadership in preventing children from running away from placement.

Sometimes, however, despite the best efforts to keep a youth in placement, the child will run away. When that occurs, the Provider/Contract Agency will:

1. Immediately call local law enforcement (LE) and provide information to LE to enter the child into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and Missing Children of Tennessee (MCOT) data bases. Ask LE to enter a Juvenile Justice (JJ) Child as a wanted person and a Social Services (SS) Child as a missing person. Immediate reporting to LE is critical because sometimes DCS requests an Endangered Child Alert for a child in serious risk of harm to self/community and LE has two hours from the time of taking a report to enter the child into the NCIC and MCOT data bases. Report refusals by LE to enter the child into the NCIC/MCOT to 1-800-TBI-FIND.
2. Right after LE takes the runaway report, report the runaway event via a phone call and an e-mail to the Family Service Worker (FSW), Team Leader, Team Coordinator, Program Coordinator, Deputy Regional Administrator, or Regional Administrator with case management responsibility for the child. If the runaway event occurs during non-business hours, contact the regional 24-7 contact person. Also, notify the child's parent/caretaker via telephone.
3. Follow up with LE within three hours of making the runaway report and obtain the NCIC number. Report the number telephonically to the regional person contacted in #2 herein and document the NCIC number and the name of the person contacted in the provider/contract agency case file for the child.
4. Immediately ensure that **Part A** of form [CS-0705, Absconder/Runaway/escapee/Recovery Checklist](#) is completed and faxed or e-mailed to designated recipients on the Instruction page of the form.  
Note: The NCIC number must be included on the form prior to faxing it to the FSW. The DCS FSW will need the checklist to include it in the runaway packet that is due to Internal Affairs Absconder Unit within seven (7) calendar days of the runaway event.
5. Complete the on-line incident report according to the time frame specified in [Policy 1.4, Incident Reporting](#) and the [Private Provider Manual](#). If the on-line system is disabled, manually complete the incident report and fax copies to all appropriate staff to be notified.
6. Within one work day, file a petition on a SS Child or an attachment/petition on a JJ Youth with the court in the county where the child was placed. According to **T.C.A 37-1-119**, the petition may be made by any person who has knowledge of the facts. Fax a copy to the FSW within one business day of the court completing the petition/attachment. If the court refused filing of the document, contact the appropriate Regional Legal Counsel for assistance.
7. **Immediately** contact the DCS FSW, Team Leader, Team Coordinator or 24-7 contact person via telephone and e-mail whenever a runaway returns during the 24-hour bed hold. **This will allow the FSW to notify Law Enforcement and Internal Affairs within one workday that the child has been recovered as is required by policy.** See the [Private Provider Manual](#) (PPM) for more information regarding return of a child to placement after a runaway event. Providers and Contract Agencies will also adhere to procedures regarding runaways in the PPM and DCS Policies.