



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

**Protocol for Reporting Delinquent Runaways, Absconders and
Escapees for DCS Juvenile Justice Case Managers: Custodial Cases**

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

This protocol outlines procedures to follow when a delinquent custodial youth runs away, absconds or escapes from their placement. These youth expose themselves to significant risk; it is the responsibility of DCS to help reduce this risk.

Upon notification that a delinquent youth has absconded or escaped from custody, the following steps must occur:

Immediate Steps:

1. Upon determining a youth has absconded or escaped, staff will **immediately** contact local law enforcement (L.E.) and have the youth entered as a **“Wanted Person”** and have them entered into NCIC via the L.E. FSW will then request a copy of the NCIC report and NCIC number. This will be placed into the youth's case file. Note: If the L.E. does not provide copies of the NCIC report then the FSW needs to obtain the NCIC number and document request, denial, and number in TFACTS.
2. If someone other than the FSW was the first to learn of the youth's absconding, the FSW will ensure that law enforcement was contacted as outlined above and if it has not been done contact law enforcement immediately.
3. The FSW will notify the parents immediately that the youth has run away via telephone.
4. Complete Section A of form [CS-0705, Absconder-Runaway-Escapee-Recovery Checklist](#) on the day a custodial youth runs away, absconds or escapes from their placement. E-mail the form to the recipients designated on the form's instruction sheet
5. **Within 24 hours** of the absconding, the FSW will file a petition and request an attachment with the committing court.
6. **Within 3 business days** of the absconding, the FSW will ensure that all supporting documentation for the [Absconder, Runaway, Escapee Recovery Checklist \(CS-0705\)](#) is obtained/completed as listed below:
 - Penalty Letter for Harboring,
 - most current photo,
 - Escapee or AWOL Petition,
 - copy of attachment

All of the above is sent to local LE, as necessary, and should be placed in the youth's case record and documented in TFACTS.

Investigation Process:

FSW will conduct a thorough investigation of the youth's last known whereabouts by:

1. Contacting agency staff, parents, foster parents, or other caregivers.

Subject: Protocol for Reporting Delinquent Runaways/Absconders/and Escapees for DCS Juvenile Justice Case Managers: Custodial Cases

2. Contacting youth's friends, school personnel, police, hospitals, clinics. If youth is 18 or older or parents whereabouts are also unknown, contact post office, Lexis Nexus, utility companies, telephone companies, DHS, child support, and TNCare.
3. Contacting any other individuals/agencies with which the youth, caregiver, or family may have had contact.

Casework Requirements:

1. Within **first business day** of absconding, FSW will visit with the youth's parents/guardian and will tactfully discuss apprehending the youth for their own safety while also tactfully discussing the laws and punishment for harboring an AWOL youth. Obtain signatures on the Penalty Letter for Harboring, (CS-0749).
2. Make (1) unannounced home visit weekly for the **first 30 days**.
3. After first 30 days, make (1) unannounced home visit **monthly**.
4. Contact the youth's parents at least **(2) times per month** via telephone call monthly. If parents do not live together, you must call each parent.
5. Conduct a full diligent search within 10 days of notice of family moving without notice to DCS.
6. All tips received concerning the whereabouts of an AWOL youth will be shared with L.E. and will enter such tips in TFACTS.
7. **TL or TC** will meet with FSW **every (2) weeks** to discuss strategies likely to result in apprehension of the absconding youth. These conferences will be noted in TFACTS by the TL or TC within (5) work days.

Apprehension:

1. FSW will **convene a CFTM** before placement, when possible, to determine why the youth ran, what will it take to keep them safe and not run. Set up a plan with the youth, parents, provider, and DCS to help prevent another absconding episode.
2. If a CFTM can not occur prior to placement, FSW will discuss with placement the need for an immediate safety plan and then will convene a CFTM within 48 hours to develop a more formal safety plan.
3. Complete Part B of form [CS-0705, Absconder Runaway Escapee Recovery Checklist](#) and e-mail/fax to L.E. that entered the youth into NCIC and to the regional Absconder Recovery Program Investigator (RARPI) within one business day of recovery of the youth.
4. Within (3) work days of apprehension, discharge or placement changes, TFACTS must be updated.

Prevention:

1. Keep lines of communication open.
2. Discuss with foster parents, provider, etc. the runaway clues, youth's triggers, etc.
3. Conduct quarterly CFTM's to help move the case forward and to address barriers.
4. Encourage all parties, including the youth, to express concerns.
5. If absconding becomes a concern, the CFT should meet immediately and develop a safety plan.

Note: All casework, CFTM's, and case notes must be entered into TFACTS and the youth's case file, as applicable, within (5) days of occurrence.