



Tennessee Department of Children's Services Protocol for Reporting Delinquent Runaways/Absconders for DCS Juvenile Justice Case Managers: Non-Custodial Cases

Supplemental to: DCS Policy 31.2, Responsibilities Regarding Runaways and Escapees

This protocol outlines procedures to follow when a non-custodial delinquent youth runs away from home or place of residence. These youth expose themselves to significant risk; it is the responsibility of DCS to help reduce this risk. This protocol references the requirements in [DCS Policy, 13.6 Minor and Major Violations- Delinquent Youth on Probation or Aftercare Supervision.-](#)

Upon notification that a delinquent youth has absconded the following steps should occur:

Immediate Steps:

1. Upon notification that a youth has absconded, staff will determine if the youth has in fact absconded or if other circumstances are involved. (i.e. at a friend or relative's home, etc). The FSW will also determine if a violation has occurred and assess if it is a major or minor violation.
2. If the youth is not a true absconder but is at a place and refusing to return home, the FSW will schedule a CFTM to discuss issues, resolutions, and treatment plans to address the issue. If the youth returns home within seventy-two (72) hours, a minor violation will be documented per policy [13.6, Minor and Major Violations-Delinquent Youth on Probation and After Care.](#)
3. If the youth has absconded for more than seventy-two (72) hours, a major violation has occurred. The FSW will complete a [Violation Report, CS-0156](#) then submit the report to the Team Leader for discussion and approval.
4. Upon approval of a Team Leader a petition may be filed. If a petition is filed a copy of the violation report must accompany the petition.
6. All steps above must be entered into TFACTS within policy guidelines.

Casework Requirements:

1. When first notified of absconding, FSW will visit with the youth's parents/guardian and will tactfully discuss apprehending the youth while also tactfully discussing the laws and punishment for harboring an AWOL youth. The FSW will discuss the risk the youth is placing themselves in by running away.
2. Contact the youth's friends, school personnel, police, hospitals, clinics. If youth is 18 or older and the parents whereabouts are also unknown, additional information should be sought from the post office, utility companies, telephone companies, DHS, youth support persons, and TNCare.
3. Contact any other individuals/agencies with which the youth, caregiver, or family may have had contact.
4. Make (1) unannounced home visit bi- monthly for the **first 30 days.**

Effective Date: 09/10

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5. After first 30 days, make (1) unannounced home visit **monthly**.
6. 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**.
7. Conduct a full diligent search within 10 days **of notice of family moving** without notice to DCS.
8. All tips received concerning the whereabouts of an AWOL youth will be shared with L.E. (if petition has been filed) and will enter such tips in TFACTS.
9. **TL or TC** will meet with FSW **monthly** 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 five (5) working days.

Apprehension:

1. FSW will **convene a CFTM** to determine why the youth ran, what it will take to keep them safe and not run. Set up a plan with the youth, parents, providers, and DCS to help prevent another absconding episode.
2. Within three (3) working days of apprehension, discharge or placement changes, TFACTS must be updated.

Prevention:

1. Keep lines of communication open.
2. Discuss with youth, parents, provider and others as applicable, runaway clues, youth's triggers, etc.
3. Conduct quarterly CFTM 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, CFT should meet immediately and develop a safety plan.

Note: All casework, CFTM, and case notes must be entered into TFACTS and the youth's case file per policy guidelines.