



Missing Child Policy and Procedures

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Policy Statement

Child Australia is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children. A child who cannot be accounted for is considered to be in potential danger, and a rapid, coordinated response is essential. This policy outlines the procedures to be followed if a child is unaccounted for, missing, or has absconded from a service, excursion, or transport arrangement.

Rationale

Children's safety and wellbeing are of primary importance, and approved providers and their services must implement appropriate measures to protect children from harm or hazards. A missing child constitutes a critical incident, making clear and well-executed procedures essential for safeguarding children. This policy outlines the strategies and responsibilities associated with ensuring clear processes in the event that a child is unaccounted for.

Responsibility

Approved Provider: The Approved Provider ensures that relevant policies and procedures are in place and that families receive adequate notification of any changes to the policies or procedures.

Nominated Supervisor and Responsible Person: The Nominated Supervisor and Responsible Person ensure:

- All staff follow relevant policies and procedures, sign the communication records, and that all training is accurately documented for each educator.
- Parents/Guardians are informed of relevant policies.
- Accurate attendance records are maintained.
- Systems are in place to monitor arrivals and departures.



- Any incidents related to child safety are managed and reported according to the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy.

Staff: Staff are responsible for:

- Understanding and complying with this policy and the associated risk assessment, signing the communication record, and completing all required training.
- Maintaining active supervision and accurate child attendance records at all times.
- Conducting regular headcounts and roll checks during transitions, excursions, and outdoor play.
- Responding promptly to incidents in line with regulatory requirements.
- Providing comfort and support to other children during an incident.
- Participating in reflective practice and training to prevent future incidents.

Parents/Guardians: Parents/ Guardians will:

- Ensure accurate and up-to-date enrolment information, including emergency contacts and authorised nominees.
- Communicate clearly with staff about absences, early pickups, or changes to routine.
- Follow the service's sign in and out procedures.
- Cooperate with the service during and after any missing child incident.
- Participate in debriefings or investigations if required.

Procedures

Failure to Arrive - OSHC

If a child expected at the service has not arrived after school:

1. Check the roll immediately. Verify:
 - a. OSHC roll,
 - b. Sign in records (paper/app),
 - c. Transport or bus logs, and
 - d. Early pick up permissions.
2. Notify the Responsible Person (Nominated Supervisor or delegate). Declare a "missing child" response:
 - a. Assign one staff member to coordinate the response
 - b. Another staff member/s must continue supervising the group.
3. Call the school office/classroom to confirm:
 - a. Was the child at school today?
 - b. Were they collected by an authorised person?



- c. Did they attend another activity or program?
4. Call the Parent/Guardian (and if unreachable, call authorised contacts in order) to confirm the child's whereabouts.
5. Call **000** (Police) immediately if:
 - a. The child's location cannot be quickly confirmed, or
 - b. You have any safety concerns

Do not wait for a set time if you believe the child may be off-site or at risk. A report must be made to Police within 30 minutes after the school bell if the child remains unaccounted for.

Be ready to provide:

- a. Child's full name, age and description,
 - b. Last known location and time,
 - c. Likely destinations or hiding places, and
 - d. Medical or safety concerns.
6. Document everything. Record:
 - a. Times,
 - b. People contacted, and
 - c. Advice or information received.

Missing from Premises

If a child is missing from the service:

1. Secure and scan:
 - a. Close and monitor all exits and gates,
 - b. Increase active supervision, and
 - c. Assign staff to monitor perimeters while maintaining appropriate ratios for the remaining children.
2. Headcount & room-to-room sweep:
 - a. Bathrooms,
 - b. Cupboards,
 - c. Under furniture,
 - d. Storage areas/storerooms,
 - e. Outdoor spaces, and
 - f. Car park or nearby sightlines (only if safe to do so).
3. Call **000** (Police) immediately if:
 - a. The child is not found right away, or
 - b. You suspect they are off-site or at risk.



Be ready to provide:

- Child's full name, age, and description,
 - Last known location and time,
 - Likely destinations or hiding places, and
 - Medical or safety concerns.
4. Notify Parents/Guardians. (A separate staff member should handle this while another liaises with police).
 5. Follow police instructions and expand the search area as directed.
 - a. Check CCTV footage or venue areas if available.
 6. Record all actions and time stamps throughout the incident.

Missing in Transit or on Excursion

If a child goes missing during an excursion or while in transit:

1. Stop and contain.
 - a. Halt all movement,
 - b. Assemble the group,
 - c. Re-count against the excursion or transport roll, and
 - d. Maintain ratios
2. Search the immediate areas.
 - a. Toilets,
 - b. Exits,
 - c. Nearby attractions,
 - d. Hiding spots, and
 - e. Ask venue staff or security to assist.
3. Call **000** immediately if:
 - a. The child is not found right away, or
 - b. There's an immediate risk (e.g., near roads, water, suspected abduction)

Be ready to provide:

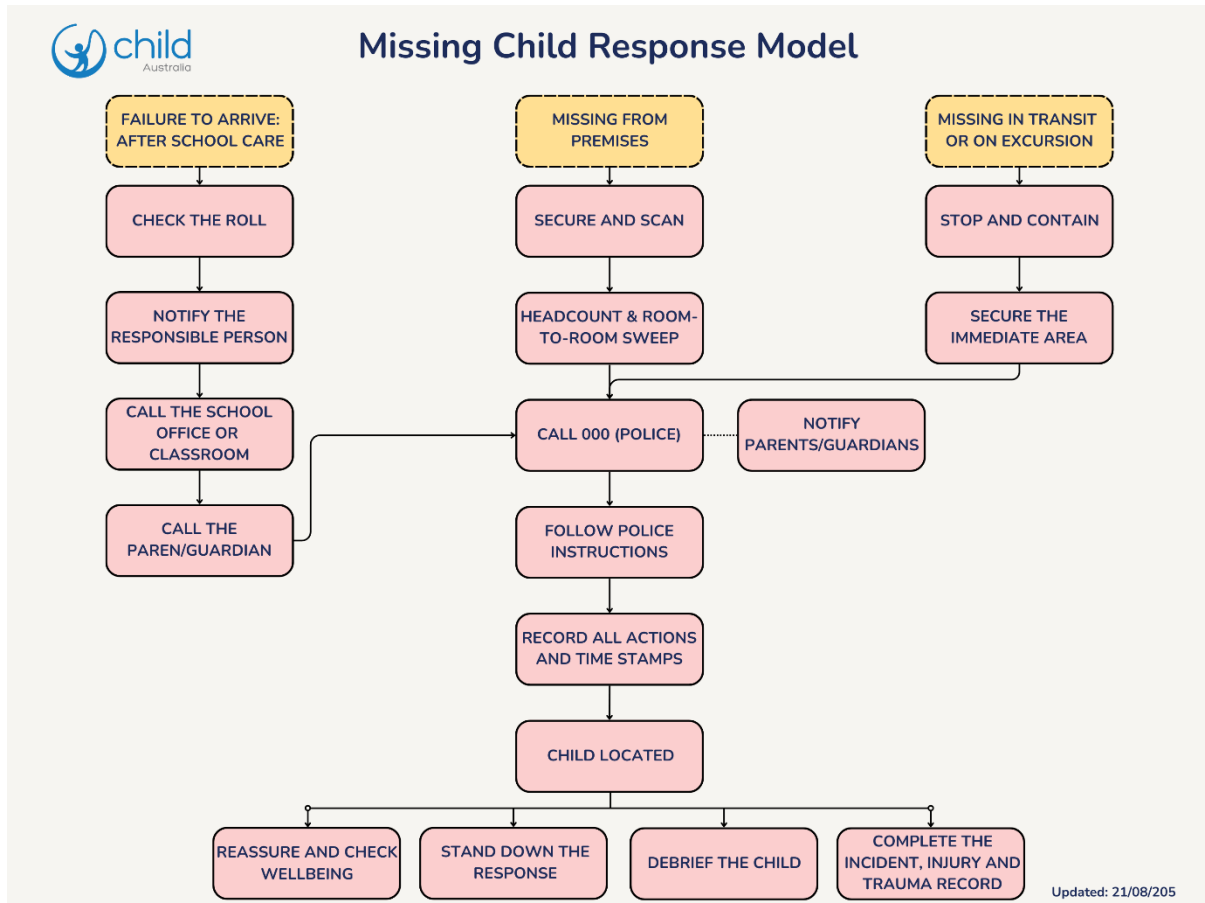
- a. Child's full name, age, and description
 - b. Last known location and,
 - c. Likely destinations or hiding places, and
 - d. Medical or safety concerns.
4. Notify Parents/Guardians and the Approved Provider.
 5. Document all actions and follow directions from Police and/or venue staff until the child located.

When the Child is Located



1. Reassure and check wellbeing. Provide first aid if needed.
2. Stand down the response and notify:
 - a. Police,
 - b. Parents/Guardians,
 - c. Approved Provider, and
 - d. Venue staff or security, if applicable.
3. Debrief the child calmly and without blame
4. Complete the Incident Record.
 - a. Keep all notes, actions taken, and time logs.

Missing Child Response Model



Legally Required Notifications

- Any incident where a child is missing or unaccounted for is classified as a serious incident.
- The state/territory Regulatory Authority must be notified of any serious incident via the NQAITS portal within 24 hours.



- Parents/guardians must be informed as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours.
- All relevant documentation must be retained in accordance with regulatory requirements.

Roles During an Incident

- **Incident Controlled (Responsible Person):** Leads response, coordinates actions, and liaises with police.
- **Search Lead:** Coordinates onsite or venue searches.
- **Communications Lead:** Handles communication with families, police, and documentation
- **Group Supervisor:** Maintains supervision and ratios for all other children

Risk Management and Prevention

- Adhere strictly to Safe Arrival of Children Policy and Delivery and Collection Policy.
- Maintain accurate sign in/out and transport records.
- Perform multiple headcounts during transitions and excursions.
- Include missing child scenarios in risk assessments.
- Ensure secure premises through daily checks.
- Train staff in emergency and escalation procedures.
- Conduct post-incident debriefings and reviews.

Privacy and Communication

- Only the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, or delegate may communicate externally (e.g., media, regulatory authority).
- No details are to be posted on social media.
- All records must be stored in line with privacy legislation and retention requirements.

Compliance and Reporting

- Incident involving missing children must be reported to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours.
- Follow mandatory reporting obligations where there is any suspicion of harm, abuse, or neglect.



Related Documents and Forms

Enrolment Form
Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
Head Count and Ratio Checks
Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy
Child Safe Environment Policy
Transport Policy and Procedure
Supervision and Active Supervision Policy
Accident, Illness and Incident Management Policy
Regulatory Authority Response Model

References

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Cth)

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Cth)

Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)

Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (NT)