

Carer Factsheet: Missing and Absent Children

What should I do if a child isn't where they are supposed to be, doesn't return to placement or leaves placement without permission?

If a child isn't at a place where they are supposed to be, you must take all reasonable steps to find them. This includes searching the house, attempting to contact them directly and indirectly via phone, text message, email or social media; contacting other people known to the child to ask if they have seen the child and checking places where the child often goes.

Who is an absent child?

A child is considered to be absent if they are not where they are meant to be for a short period of time, without permission and their whereabouts can be quickly established. For example:

- a child is due to return at 7pm, however the Carer has spoken to them on their mobile and confirmed they will be home at 10pm with the Youth Bus;
- a child who has left placement and family members confirm they are at their house;
- a child who is not in placement but has been located at their friend's house.

Do I need to tell Territory Families if a child is absent?

Yes. You can tell the Case Manager or the Local Office during business hours or call Central Intake after hours on 1800 700 250. You should tell Territory Families the time the child was last seen, the time and nature of the last contact with the child i.e. via phone, visited house where child is, the current location/whereabouts of the child and the anticipated plan for the child to return to placement.

Who is a missing child?

A child is considered to be missing when their *whereabouts are unknown* **and** there are fears for their safety or there are serious concerns for their welfare. Such examples may include: a child who has not returned to placement at the designated time, is non-contactable, attempts have been made to locate the child but they cannot be located at known addresses or places they usually visit and there are concerns for the child's safety.

Should I report a missing child to Police or Territory Families?

You must report a child as "missing" to Northern Territory Police. You should tell Police the actions you have taken to look for the child and give Police as much information as possible to help you and Territory Families find the child. You can report to Police by completing the [Territory Families Report to NT Police – Child Missing from Care](#) and emailing it to Police.Assistance@pfes.nt.gov.au, then calling the Police Assistance Line on 13144 to ensure the report was received.

After you have reported the missing child to Police, you should tell Territory Families that the child is missing, the actions you have taken to look for the child and the reference report number given by Police. You should also complete a Reportable Incident form and email a copy to the Territory Families Practice Integrity Unit (TF.PracticeIntegrity@nt.gov.au) and your Case Manager.

What will the Police and Territory Families do?

Police will review all information provided to them; consider the vulnerabilities and risk factors associated with the child; categorise the risk to the child or young person; and determine the level of Police resourcing required to locate the child and return them to a place of safety.

Territory Families will work with you and the Police to continue to look for the child and return them to your care.

When should I immediately call the police?

You should contact NT Police on 000 if you think the child has been abducted.

Contact NT Police immediately for assistance on 131 444 if you are concerned that the child is at imminent risk of danger or imminent risk of significant harm.

The imminent risk of danger increases for children aged 10 years or under; if they have a disability, have a history of self-harming behaviour; were highly distressed at the time they left placement; they are at risk of plausible threats to harm by others; or is at risk of sexual exploitation.

Responding to children absent or missing from Placement

