

<b>Section:</b>	<b>School Administration</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Missing Student</b>

## Purpose

To outline the requirements for school staff to respond in the event of a student who is missing during school hours, or enroute to and from school. This procedure includes guidelines and general procedures as well as the following:

- Part One: General Procedures for responding when a student is deemed missing
- Part Two: Determining whether the student is at significant risk
- Part Three: Proactive Considerations for Children with Elopement Tendencies (Flight Risk)
- Part Four: Planning for Safety for students who elope, abscond, wander, or hide
- Part Five: Sample elopement plan

## Guidelines

1. Safety is the first concern when a student disappears, wanders away, absconds, or elopes while at school.
2. A student is considered missing when their whereabouts cannot be established and/or where the student is a known flight risk, or assessed to be vulnerable, or the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be the subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.
3. Where a student has a known concern, proactive measures such as a risk assessment will be conducted, and an appropriate safety/supervision/behaviour plan put into place and shared with relevant staff at school.
4. For any student with a risk that would cause a safety response, staff must develop a student information profile sheet, with pictures, readily available.
5. For students with risk, parents may be required to accompany the child on field trips if deemed necessary for safety.
6. If you discover any student who appears alone or at risk for leaving campus, including a child without supervision, stay with the student until you can safely connect them with supervision staff or their caregiver. During School hours, after or before school hours will affect the procedural response.
7. Planning and preventative measures help curb eloping, absconding, and wandering behaviours.

## Part One: General Procedures

Upon discovery that a child's whereabouts are unknown:

1. Staff will immediately report to the office to inform the principal or designate of any student who is believed to be missing.
2. Staff will consider the student's age, vulnerability (e.g., a disability or medical condition), and mental state immediately prior to leaving the school grounds or the school-approved activity, i.e., whether they were highly distressed, drug or alcohol affected.

3. Staff will use professional judgement, and the student's Flight Risk Safety Plans (if applicable) to assist in assessing the risk and urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the student's whereabouts before notifying the RCMP.
4. Where a missing child has a disability or support needs (particularly those who are assigned extra supervision and have a Flight Risk Safety Plan), or staff is given any indicators that the child has run away or been abducted, notify RCMP IMMEDIATELY and contact the front desk at the district education office (DEO) 604 826 6286 ext. 0 while they begin the initial check of the school. The front desk clerk of the DEO will notify the Superintendent or designate.
5. School staff will ensure the appropriate supervision of other students, whilst action is taken to locate and/or establish the safety of the missing or absconding student.

## If a child goes missing DURING school hours:

When a student is reported missing during the school day, the following procedures will be used by the principal or designate who has received the missing child report:

1. School staff will check specialist rooms frequented by the student or the last known location of the student, while clerical staff use the intercom or class phones to check rooms.

*If the child involved has a disability or support needs (particularly those who are assigned extra supervision and has a Flight Risk Safety Plan), or staff is given any indicators that the child has run away, been abducted, or has been left in an unsafe location; staff is to notify RCMP IMMEDIATELY, as well as the district education office while they begin the initial check of the school.*

2. The principal or designate and all available school staff (Educational Assistants, Counsellors, Indigenous Liaison Workers, etc.) will check washrooms, classrooms, multipurpose rooms, on-site care providers, and outside school grounds.
3. The clerical will complete an intercom "all call" over the entire school stating for "child X to report to the office, and for any staff with child X to call the office, or send a runner to check in." If safe to do so, escort the student to the office.
4. All staff will look outside their windows and the immediate hallway areas.
5. After a maximum of 8 minutes from the time of the initial missing child report was made, and considering the age and vulnerability of the student, the principal or designate will call 911 to notify local RCMP, log time called and name of person to whom they spoke. The principal or designate will provide student information as follows:
  - a. The student's name/s; date of birth; and parent/guardian;
  - b. Where and when they went missing;
  - c. Previous missing episodes and where they went;
  - d. Who, if anyone, they went missing with;
  - e. What the child was wearing plus any belongings they had with them such as bags, phone etc.; include mobile number;
  - f. Description and recent photo;
  - g. Medical history, if relevant;
  - h. Time and location last seen;
  - i. Circumstances or events around going missing with relevant safeguarding information;
  - j. Details of family, friends, and associates;

6. Staff continue to search while the principal or designate contacts the parent/ guardian and informs them of the situation.
7. Call the District Education Office to report the situation and discuss next steps.

If a child goes missing AFTER school hours:

When it is reported that a student failed to make it home after school, the following procedure will be used by the principal or designate:

Determine the route the student uses to get home:

- ☐ Student is a Walker
  - ☐ On-Site After School Care
  - ☐ Student Rides the School Bus
  - ☐ Student Rides Public Transportation
- ☐ The student is a walker
    1. If the student is a walker, contact any crosswalk staff and/or supervision staff to determine if they were seen walking.
    2. Contact parent/guardian, and other emergency contacts to determine if family members or friends may have picked up the child.
    3. Check with the classroom teacher, and any other appropriate staff to determine the last time they were seen, and if they mentioned anything unusual about their plans.
    4. Call 911 to notify RCMP, logging time called and name of person to whom they spoke and call the district education office to report the situation.
    5. Search the building and grounds and continue contacting known siblings or friends of the student (including neighbours, classmates, other students on the bus) to determine the last time the student was seen and if they mentioned anything about where they were going.
    6. Have student information profile sheet with picture (if available) for RCMP.
- ☐ On Site After School Care
    1. Check with the on-site after school care provider to see if they are in attendance or scheduled to be there.
    2. If the child is not there, contact parent/guardian, and other emergency contacts to determine if family members or friends may have picked up the child.
    3. Check with the classroom teacher, and any other appropriate staff to determine the last time they were seen, and if they mentioned anything unusual about their plans.
    4. Call 911 to notify RCMP, logging time called and name of person to whom they spoke and call the district education office to report the situation.
    5. Search the building and grounds and continue contacting known siblings or friends of the student (including neighbours, classmates, other students on the bus) to determine the last time the student was seen and if they mentioned anything about where they were going.
    6. Have student information profile sheet with picture (if available) for RCMP.
- ☐ Student Rides the School Bus
    1. If the student is a bus rider, call the transportation department (604 826 2377) immediately to report the situation.
    2. The transportation department will contact the driver(s) to determine if the child is currently on the bus and/or if the driver saw them get off the bus.
    3. The transportation department will also begin identifying any other buses, bus stops or transfer locations that need to be checked.

## Responsibilities of the Bus Driver:

1. As soon as a student is reported missing, immediately notify their dispatcher by radio and give the exact location of the bus;
2. Move the vehicle to a safe place and wait for the dispatcher's instructions. Bring the vehicle to a complete stop and keep the radio transmitter turned on;
3. Ask the students to remain in their seats and inspect the bus, looking under the seats, to determine whether the student is on the bus; and
4. If the student is found at school, the bus driver shall inform the parent/guardian waiting at the bus stop and ask them to contact the school principal to arrange for pick-up of the student.

## Responsibilities of the Transportation Manager or delegate:

1. As soon as a student is deemed missing by a bus driver, contact the drivers of the other buses servicing the same school, to check whether the student may have boarded the wrong bus;
2. Contact the school immediately so that the staff can check whether the student is at school;
3. Contact the district education office to inform staff that a student is deemed missing;
4. If the student is found at school, notify the parent/guardian waiting at the bus stop that their child is still at school and they must contact the school to arrange pick up;
5. If the student cannot be located after the first search (phone calls made to the school and the parent or guardian of the missing student), notify the RCMP immediately (911) and follow their instructions.
6. Have student information profile sheet with picture (if available) for RCMP.

## ☐ Student Rides Public Transportation

1. Contact parent/guardian, and other emergency contacts to determine if family members or friends may have picked up the child.
2. Contact the dispatch service of BC Transit Mission ([604-854-3232](tel:604-854-3232)) to determine if they used or are currently on the route, or where they were dropped off.
3. Check with the classroom teacher(s), and any other appropriate staff to determine the last time they were seen, and if they mentioned anything unusual about their plans.
4. Search the building and grounds and continue contacting known siblings or friends of the student (including neighbors, classmates, other students on the bus) to determine the last time the student was seen and if they mentioned anything about where they were going.
5. Contact the district education office to inform staff that a student is deemed missing.
6. If the student is found at school, notify the parent waiting at the bus stop that their child is still at school, and they must contact the school to arrange pick up.
7. If the student cannot be located after the first search (phone calls made to the school and the parent or guardian of the missing student), notify the RCMP immediately (911) and follow their instructions.
8. Have student information profile sheet with picture (if available) for RCMP.
9. If the student is found at school, notify the parent first, then district education office.

## Part Two: Determining whether the student is at significant risk

A student missing during school hours would be prioritized as 'significant risk' where:

- a. The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child/young person is in danger through their own vulnerability. Vulnerability characteristics may include;
  - I. A Child with a disability or support needs requiring direct supervision
  - II. Children on a plan (IEP, Staff Safety Plan, Care Plan, Positive Behaviour Support Plan, NSS Care Plan, Seizure Plan or other medical plan)
- b. The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.
- c. There are indications that the child/young person has already come to harm (Substances, suicidal ideation, grooming, radicalization etc.)

Other contributory factors should be taken into consideration when determining if the student is at significant risk, for example;

- a. Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying?
- b. Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?
- c. Is there any known history of domestic violence?
- d. Is there concern about the parent's ability to protect the child from harm?
- e. Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- f. Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- g. Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- h. Has the child been a victim of bullying?
- i. Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g., does the child need essential medication or health care?
- j. Are there parental or custody disputes?

After considering the risk, summarize the concerns and decide on creating an appropriate plan which could include one or more of the following (basic supervision plan, behaviour plan, Flight Risk Safety Plan, IEP goal adjustments, etc...).

If there is a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect, take appropriate action in accordance with the Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect AP #3.4.1

## **Part Three: Proactive Considerations for Children with Elopement Tendencies (Flight Risk)**

Where a student has a known risk of being missing, a risk assessment for the student will be conducted and a Flight Risk Safety Plan put into place. This plan should be done in consultation with the applicable school staff (administrator or delegate, classroom teacher, inclusive support teacher, educational assistant, Indigenous Liaison Workers, Youth Care Workers, counsellor, and any other support person working with the child or youth).

If a student has elopement or wandering tendencies, the following proactive procedures should be considered and/or enacted:

1. Based on the risk assessment, decide what type of plan is required to keep the student safe (supervision, behaviour plan, Flight Risk Safety Plan, IEP, etc...). Some students will require a behaviour plan to learn safe strategies, in addition to having a Flight Risk Safety Plan or supervision plan.
2. All staff will be made aware of students with Flight Risk Safety Plans.

3. School based student services support staff should be informed of the extra supervisory needs of the student.
4. A Personal Development Application (PDA) will be submitted to the Executive Assistant for Student Services indicating that the student is a flight risk.
5. A copy of the supervision/behavior plan/Flight Risk Safety Plan will be submitted with the PDA and a copy will be kept in the student file.
6. The student may need to be assigned to a staff member for visual supervision. If responsibility rotates, all staff should be made aware of when they are responsible for visual supervision. Extra special care should be taken during recess and classroom transition times, including lunch breaks.
7. All relevant school staff should be alerted of the student and be directed to return the student to the classroom, any time they should see the student without direct adult supervision, unless otherwise stated in a Worker Safety Plan.
8. Necessary Stop sign visuals, social stories, should be considered, considering the least restrictive safety measures required for keeping the student safe at school.
9. Consultation with District Student Services Staff may be considered if supervision alone is not sufficient in keeping the student safe at school. For example, working with POPARD, Mentor Teacher, or Occupational Therapist may be required.
10. Collect data to inform an appropriate behaviour plan.
11. If student is with an adult outside of the classroom, the adult may wish to carry walkie-talkies, or a whistle, in case the student runs and the adult needs assistance.
12. Every day, a note should be made regarding what the student is wearing in case a search needs to be initiated.
13. Make sure a picture of the student is readily available.
14. For students requiring specialized transportation, the bus should not drop students off at home unless a responsible care giver meets the school bus.

## **Part Four: Planning for Safety for students who elope, abscond, wander, or hide:**

Prevention is the key:

- a. Designate a space in the room where students can go
- b. Establish a safe area with clear boundaries
- c. Keep the student's desk as far as possible from the door(s)
- d. Allow the student to take frequent, structured, supervised breaks
- e. Place a visual reminder or bells on the door
- f. Include staff in the building of any plans

For all students who elope or hide in such a way that there is risk for the student's safety, a Care Team Meeting, including the caregivers, should be scheduled to assess risk and triggers and decide to proceed with an action plan listed below:

- a. Develop a Basic Supervision Plan or
- b. Develop a Behaviour Support Plan or
- c. Develop a Flight Risk Safety Plan and
- d. Adjusting student's IEP (if applicable)
- e. Consideration of any other plans including Worker Safety Plans

## Part Five: Sample elopement plan:

An elopement plan might state steps to include:

1. If the student elopes from the classroom, the supervising adult with them will follow them.
2. The supervising adult will immediately alert the support team of the student's elopement through a call or walkie talkie.
3. The principal or designate will immediately go to the front doors of the building. The vice principal will cover the side exit, the counselor will cover the side doors etc..
4. The person following the student will communicate with the support team what is happening (where the student is located, if they are walking, running, crying, etc.).
5. The team will communicate when the student is secure and debrief if the plan was effective.
6. An additional plan will need to be developed for returning the student to the learning environment after an elopement has occurred.
7. As with all behaviors that deal with the safety of a student, the incident should be documented, and parents should be informed immediately.

**Resources:** <https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/safety/elope-at-school/>  
<https://pathfindersforautism.org/resources/safety/wandering-and-elopement/>

**Date Approved:**      **November 2023**

**Legal Reference:**

**Cross Reference:**

**Forms:** Flight Risk Safety Plan Template