



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services



**Child
Protective Services**

Missing Children Protocol

November 2025

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Introduction

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) defines a **missing child** as a child or youth in DFPS managing conservatorship who:

- Runs away;
- Is abducted by a known or unknown person; or
- Is otherwise absent from care with no known location.

The *Missing Children Protocol* (Missing Protocol) is established in accordance with the [Child Protective Services Handbook](#), as well as federal and state statutes and requirements. The Missing Protocol should be followed in conjunction with existing policy, and all actions must be documented within appropriate timeframes.

This protocol applies to all Child Protective Investigations (CPI) and Child Protective Services (CPS) staff, inclusive of Single Source Continuum Contractors, working with children and youth missing from DFPS conservatorship.

The Missing Protocol:

- Outlines collaboration and coordination among staff roles to support expedient recoveries;
- Supports DFPS' continued adherence to the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act 2014 reporting requirements for missing children and suspected victims of sex and labor trafficking; and
- Allows for service planning for identified youth at risk of or victims of human trafficking.

Expected Quality Practice

When a child or youth is missing from DFPS conservatorship, all stages of service are required to act with urgency and prioritize a coordinated, immediate, and expedient recovery. All responses to missing children and youth utilize trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches that prioritizes the safety, dignity, and voice of the child or youth.

Missing Events Stages

Figure 1 details the different stages of missing events and the actions involved.

Figure 1. Missing Events Stages



1. Missing Event



Missing Status Notifications

Immediate:
No Later
Than 8 Hours



Primary or On-Call Caseworker

1. Law Enforcement

- Provide a description: clothes, hair color, height, weight, and other critical information.*
- Advise if Endangered Child or Amber Alert criteria is met and/or if a **Suspected-Unconfirmed** or **Confirmed** human trafficking victim.
- Obtain law enforcement case and NIC numbers.

2. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)

- Call 1-800-843-5678 or report online at <https://cmfc.missingkids.org/reportit>.
- Provide local law enforcement case and NIC numbers, critical information*, if a **Suspected-Unconfirmed** or **Confirmed** human trafficking victim, and all other information requested.
- Obtain confirmation and NCMEC numbers.

3. Required Parties

- Advise all required parties of child missing status.
- Request potential locating information.
- Request caseworker communication, if contacted by the child or have tips on location.

4. Regional Missing Children Coordinator, Special Investigations, Supervisor and Chain of Command

- Email the regional special investigator mailbox
 - ▶ Subject Line: Urgent Missing Child Request for Assistance
 - ▶ Copy Line: regional missing children coordinator, supervisor, and chain of command
- Advise on the following:
 - ▶ Details on date and time of the missing event.
 - ▶ Of any actions to this point to report or recover missing child.
 - ▶ If a missing child is a youth parent who either left child behind or is missing with the child.
 - ▶ If Endangered Child or Amber Alert criteria is met and/or if a **Suspected-Unconfirmed** or **Confirmed** human trafficking victim.
- Attach Missing Child Preliminary Sheet, **Form K-908-4100**, most recent photo, and any court orders of dependency.

After Hours Note: The on-call supervisor calls the on-call Special Investigations program director in addition to the email notice above.



Primary Caseworker

- Confirm tasks were completed as listed above for missing events handled by on-call staff and complete any outstanding tasks.

* Critical information to share includes diagnoses, medication needs, pertinent relationships and if the missing child is a youth parent who left the child behind or is missing with the child.



Initial Actions and Recovery Plan

Immediate



Primary or On-Call Caseworker

- Document **Missing Child Detail** in IMPACT and verify all notifications were completed.
- Assign special investigator as secondary to **SUB**-stage.
- Staff, develop, and document initial plan for immediate recovery actions with the special investigator.
 - ▶ Discuss any pertinent relationships, placement instabilities, vulnerabilities, and accessibility needs, such as language, medical, mental health, developmental, trauma history, and human trafficking concerns.
- Complete initial/immediate recovery actions and document.



Primary Caseworker

- **Within 2 Business Days of the Missing Event:** Schedule the recovery plan meeting.
- Complete initial/immediate recovery actions and document.
- Facilitate the recovery plan meeting and document the recovery plan.
 - ▶ Determine if a *Writ of Attachment* from the court of jurisdiction is appropriate.
- Continue with efforts to recover and keep the chain of command informed.



Special Investigator

- Verify the secondary assignment and receipt of **Form K-908-4100**, current photo, and court orders of dependency.
- Staff, develop, and document initial plan for immediate recovery actions with the caseworker.
 - ▶ Discuss any pertinent relationships and, vulnerabilities, such as medical, developmental, and human trafficking concerns.
- Complete initial/immediate recovery actions and document including:
 - ▶ Law enforcement contact;
 - ▶ NCMEC contact, verify receipt of information, and request flier; and
 - ▶ If human trafficking concerns exist, conduct online searches and spotlight.
- **Within 2 Business Days of the Missing Event:** Participate in the recovery plan meeting.
- Continue with efforts to recover and keep the chain of command informed.
- If the Court issued a *Writ of Attachment*, obtain a copy from Conservatorship and coordinate with the local Sheriff's Department or Constable's Office.

2. Recovery Efforts



Recovery Plan Meeting

Within
2
Business
Days



Primary Caseworker

- **Within 2 Business Days of the Missing Event:** Schedule the recovery plan meeting.

Recovery Meeting Participants

The recovery plan meeting may include the following:

Mandatory Staff

- Primary or on-call caseworker;
- Primary caseworker's supervisor;
- Program director;
- Special investigator;
- Special investigator program director; and
- Other casework staff, if applicable:
 - ▶ CPI;
 - ▶ Family-Based Safety Services;
 - ▶ Preparation for Adult Living;
 - ▶ **Development disability specialist**;
 - ▶ **Regional nurse consultant**;
 - ▶ **Well-being specialist**; and
 - ▶ Local permanency specialist.

Key Stakeholders as Appropriate

- Ad litem;
- Court-Appointed Special Advocate;
- Attorney (DFPS, regional, county, district);
- Primary caregiver;
- Law enforcement;
- NCMEC:
 - ▶ Case manager; and
 - ▶ Recovery Services Team for **Suspected-Unconfirmed** or **Confirmed** human trafficking victim;
- Probation or parole officer;
- **Care coordinator**;
- Child's advocacy center staff;
- **Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Advocate**; and
- Relatives, fictive kin, and friends.

The Recovery Plan

The recovery plan meeting participants develop a recovery plan for a coordinated outline of all:

- Planned and active efforts to recover a youth.
- Preliminary interventions and services to initiate for the child or youth upon recovery.

The plan should be revised throughout the missing or runaway episode, as needed.

Plan Contents

Recovery plan information includes but is not limited to:

- Information regarding:
 - ▶ Locating the child or youth;
 - ▶ The child's/youth's recent wishes, concerns, and/or challenges;
 - ▶ Historical missing events and reasons given by the child or youth; and
 - ▶ Historical runaway prevention plans.
- Tasks assigned to recovery plan meeting participants.
- Provision of information to inform Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT).
- Potential engagement with a:
 - ▶ Care Coordination Team (CCT);
 - ▶ CSEY Advocate; and
 - ▶ Child's advocacy center.
- Youth's placement options upon recovery.
- A communication plan which includes the frequency of updates and meetings.



Ongoing Recovery Efforts

Ongoing Until
Child Recovered



Until the child is recovered, persistent efforts are made to contact the child or youth through known communication channels to ascertain safety and wellbeing with the goal of recovering.



Primary Caseworker

- Maintain primary case responsibility and coordinate all recovery efforts in collaboration with the special investigator.
- Schedule, facilitate, and document subsequent recovery plan meetings as needed.
- Provide information to inform the CSE-IT.
- **On the 14th Day of the Missing Event and if the Youth is Still Missing:** Update the **Placement Detail** page living arrangement in IMPACT as:
 - ▶ **Runaway;**
 - ▶ **Abducted-Known Person;** or
 - ▶ **Abducted-Stranger.**
- At a minimum, **monthly** contact and documentation with:
 - ▶ NCMEC;
 - ▶ Law enforcement and criminal justice entities;
 - ▶ Caregivers (including former caregivers);
 - ▶ Relatives;
 - ▶ CCT and/or CSEY Advocate, if applicable;
 - ▶ Services providers; and
 - ▶ Other pertinent relationships, as needed.
- Participate and document the **quarterly** missing child briefing facilitated by the regional missing children's coordinator.



Special Investigator

- Support and collaborate with the primary caseworker in all recovery efforts.
- Conduct online searches, document results, and advise the caseworker of outcomes.
- Participate in subsequent recovery plan meetings.
- Gather information to inform the CSE-IT.
- **Weekly** contact and documentation with:
 - ▶ NCMEC;
 - ▶ Law enforcement and criminal justice entities; and
 - ▶ Others, as needed;
- Support the primary caseworker in **monthly** contact and document with:
 - ▶ Caregivers (including former caregivers);
 - ▶ Relatives;
 - ▶ CCT and/or CSEY Advocate, if applicable;
 - ▶ Services providers; and
 - ▶ Other pertinent relationships, as needed.
- Participate in the **quarterly** missing child briefing facilitated by the regional missing children's coordinator.

3. Recovery Event



Located Youth

Immediate:
No Later
Than 2 Hours



All stages of service are required to act with urgency and prioritize an immediate and expedient trauma-informed recovery.



Primary or On-Call Caseworker

- Assign the special investigator as secondary to **SUB**-stage.
- Notify the chain of command and special investigator of located youth and who located.
- If located by others and if able, assist with recovery effort **within 2 hours** and coordinate transfer of possession.
- If unable to recover the youth, request assistance from the supervisor and chain of command.
- If the youth is in possession, proceed to the recovery assessment.



Special Investigator

- Notify the chain of command and primary caseworker of located youth and who located.
- If located by others and if able, assist with recovery effort **within 2 hours** and coordinate with primary caseworker transfer of possession.
- If special investigator located the youth and has possession, proceed to the recovery assessment.



Supervisor and Chain of Command

- Assist the primary caseworker in need of recovery assistance:
 - ▶ Delegation to unit members;
 - ▶ Courtesy requests; and
 - ▶ Coordinate transfer of possession.



Recovery Assessment

Immediate:
No Later
Than 2 Hours



The recovery assessment is conducted immediately to evaluate and stabilize the child's physical, emotional and crisis needs following recovery. This ensures the child's safety, well-being, and readiness to participate in subsequent interviews or services through coordinated medical, psychiatric, or supportive interventions.



Primary or On-Call Caseworker or Special Investigator

- Assess and stabilize the immediate physical or crisis needs for the recovered child or youth:
 - ▶ Medical;
 - ▶ Sexual assault forensic exam;
 - ▶ Psychiatric;
 - ▶ Detox and/or intoxication;
 - ▶ Hunger, last meal, and thirst;
 - ▶ Appropriate clothing; and
 - ▶ Sleep deprivation.
- Evaluate capacity and ability to participate in the recovery interview. Pre/non-verbal, intellectual, developmental, and physical barriers and/or legal restrictions must be assessed on an individual basis.
- Determine the time, location, and responsible party for the recovery interview after crisis and basic needs are stabilized.
- Determine the time and location of the forensic interview, if needed.



Recovery Interview

Immediate:
No Later
Than 2 Hours

The recovery interview should:

- Be conversational and actively engage the child or youth to identify their desires, needs, strengths, supports, and goals; and
- Gather the who, what, when, where, why and how specifics and determine the reasons leading to the absence, experiences during the absence, and if any following occurred:
 - ▶ Child abuse or neglect; and/or
 - ▶ Human trafficking victimization or if risk indicators exist.



Primary or On-Call Caseworker or Special Investigator

- The recovering caseworker or special investigator conducts the recovery interview, if appropriate.
- **During the 7-Day Window:** If the recovery interview was not completed at recovery, multiple interview attempts must be made if the child is detained; refuses; runs away and returns within the 7 days; or is unable to communicate due to temporary impairment.
- **Within 24 hours of the Recovery Interview or Attempt** document:
 - ▶ A contact narrative including full documentation and observations;
 - ▶ A recovery interview and attempts on the **Recovery Detail** page in IMPACT;
 - ▶ Any sexual victimization in the child's **Sexual Incident History** page in IMPACT; and
 - ▶ Any human trafficking victimization in the child's **Human Trafficking Victimization** page in IMPACT.



Primary Caseworker

- **Within 7 Days of Recovery:** Save and complete the **Recovery Detail** in IMPACT page after coordinating with the special investigator that all information is complete.



Recovery Status Notification

Time Sensitive



Recovery status notifications ensure timely communication and coordination following a child's recovery. These actions confirm all required parties are informed, documentation is completed, and supervisory staff remain updated on the recovery process and any victimization status.



Primary or On-Call Caseworker

- **Immediately No Later Than 12 Hours** notify:
 - ▶ Regional missing coordinator, NCMEC, and law enforcement of the recovery.
 - ▶ Required parties of the recovery.
- **Immediately No Later Than 24 Hours:**
Document notifications in the **Child Recovery** page in IMPACT.



Special Investigator

- **Immediately No Later Than 12 Hours:**
Notify the regional missing coordinator, NCMEC, and law enforcement of the recovery.



Supervisor and Chain of Command

- **First Business Day Post Recovery:**
 - ▶ Notify the recovery plan meeting participants of the recovery.
 - ▶ Keep apprised of the recovery process and any victimization status.

4. Post Recovery

Time Sensitive

Post Recovery Actions



Ensure all needs, safety concerns and any victimization experienced during the child's absence are promptly addressed, documented and coordinated through follow-up efforts and services.



Primary or On-Call Caseworker

- **By 7 p.m. the Following Calendar Day:** Update the placement and living arrangement in IMPACT.
- **Within 7 Days of Recovery:** Conduct and document the recovery interview and attempts in coordination with the special investigator if not completed at recovery.



Conservatorship Supervisor

- **Within 3 Days of Recovery:** Participate in the post recovery meeting.
- **By the 7th Day of Recovery:** Coordinate with the primary caseworker and special investigator on the CSE-IT completion.



Special Investigator

- **Within 8 Hours from Suspicion, Identification, Disclosure, or CSE-IT Clear Concern:**
 - ▶ Report to law enforcement and Statewide Intake any known or suspected abuse, neglect, and/or victimization, regardless of who is the alleged perpetrator;
 - ▶ Notify the primary caseworker of reports made;
 - ▶ Schedule a forensic interview in coordination with law enforcement and the children's advocacy center-multi-disciplinary teams;
 - ▶ Attend and document forensic interview; and
 - ▶ Debrief the forensic interview results with Conservatorship.
- **Within 3 Business Days of Recovery:** Participate in the post recovery meeting.
- **Within 7 Days of Recovery:** Conduct and document the recovery interview and attempts in coordination with the caseworker if not completed at recovery.
- **By the 7th Day of Recovery** coordinate with the conservatorship supervisor and complete the CSE-IT:
 - ▶ Coordinate with primary caseworker on the score;
 - ▶ Document completion; and
 - ▶ Upload the CSE-IT into One Case.



Post Recovery Actions

Time Sensitive



Primary Caseworker

- **Within 8 Hours from Suspicion, Identification, Disclosure, or CSE-IT Clear Concern:**
 - ▶ Report to law enforcement and Statewide Intake any known or suspected abuse, neglect, and/or victimization, regardless of who is the alleged perpetrator; and
 - ▶ Notify Special Investigations.
 - ▶ Coordinate with Special Investigations to schedule a forensic interview in coordination with law enforcement and the children's advocacy center multi-disciplinary teams.
- **Within 3 Business Days of Recovery:**
 - ▶ Schedule and facilitate the post recovery meeting
 - ▶ Document the post recovery plan including a runaway prevention plan for the child or youth with runaway as the reason for missing.
- **By the 7th Day of Recovery:**
 - ▶ Inform CSE-IT completion.
 - ▶ Complete the **Child Recovery Detail**.

Consultation and Coordination:

- Staff the results of the forensic interview with Special Investigations.
- For human trafficking victimization with **Suspected-Unconfirmed** or **Confirmed**, or a **CSE-IT Clear Concern**, refer to the CCT, CSEY Advocate Agency, and other services.
- Arrange for follow-up services.

Documentation and Reporting:

- Complete the Human Trafficking Services Referral **Survey** for CCT including opt-out program director decisions and CSEY Advocate Agency.
- Document any sexual victimization in the child's **Sexual Incident History** page.
- Document any human trafficking victimization in the child's **Human Trafficking Victimization** page.

Planning:

- Update the child plan of service.
- Confirm placement stability and ensure the caregivers or providers are aware of any safety needs or trauma triggers.



Post Recovery Meeting

Within
3
Business
Days



A post recovery meeting is held to ensure necessary actions are taken, interventions and services are initiated and information for CSE-IT is gathered.



Primary Caseworker

- **Within 3 Business Days of Recovery:**
 - ▶ Schedule and facilitate the post recovery meeting; and
 - ▶ Document the post recovery plan including a runaway prevention plan for the child or youth with runaway as the reason for missing.

Requirements and Expectations

The following are requirements and expectations for the post recovery meeting:

- Participants should be the same as the recovery plan meeting participants, and the youth, if possible.
- Standard releases and confidentiality agreements are addressed with external parties as needed.
- Stakeholder availability and/or child's unwillingness to participate should not impede adherence to timeframes.
- Implement and/or adjust the recovery plan to prioritize actions and address the additional physical and emotional needs of the child or youth.
- Assess and develop a plan for ongoing recovery interview attempts as needed.
- Develop or update a runaway prevention plan for a child or youth whose reason for missing was runaway.
- Determine referrals for:
 - ▶ Children's advocacy center – multi-disciplinary teams;
 - ▶ CCT where available;
 - ▶ CSEY Advocate where available; and
 - ▶ Other interventions/supports.

5. Special Situations



Law Enforcement Declines a Missing Child Report

- If the appropriate law enforcement officials refuse to file a missing child or person report on the missing child, the caseworker must **immediately** notify the chain of command and include the Special Investigations program director.
- The Special Investigations program director must request the Texas Department of Public Service place the missing child on the Child Safety Check Alert List.



Missing at Time of Removal

- CPI staff is responsible for following the Missing Protocol when custody of a child is obtained, but is missing at the time of removal or when attempting to take possession.



Youth Parent Missing With Child

- If the youth's child is in DFPS conservatorship:
 - ▶ Report each as missing to law enforcement and NCMEC.
 - ▶ Share any safety concerns for each with all partners.
 - ▶ Collect distinct NIC and NCMEC numbers for each.
 - ▶ Execute the Missing Protocol steps for each.
- If youth parent's child is **not** in DFPS conservatorship:
 - ▶ Report only the youth parent as missing to law enforcement and NCMEC.
 - ▶ Advise all partners that youth parent who is missing has possession of their child.
 - ▶ Share any safety concerns for each with all partners.
 - ▶ Report any abuse and/or neglect concerns for the youth's child to Statewide Intake.
 - ▶ Execute the Missing Protocol steps for the youth parent.
 - ▶ Continue to assess safety concerns for each with all partners through the recovery efforts.



Youth Parent Missing Without Child

Regardless of whether the youth's child is **in or not in** DFPS conservatorship:

- Involve chain of command.
- Assess the circumstances and safety needs of the youth's child and take appropriate actions, such as new investigation, safety planning, and exigent circumstances.



Young Adult Missing from Extended Foster Care (All Placement Types)

If a young adult in Extended Foster Care (all placement types) is missing or suspected to have been abducted, and the young adult's location is unknown, **immediately but no later than 8 hours**, the caseworker notifies:

- Appropriate law enforcement officials in the jurisdiction where the young adult went missing:
 - ▶ Provide a description of the youth adult, such as clothes, hair color, height, weight, and other critical information.*
 - ▶ Advise if the young adult is a **Suspected-Unconfirmed** or **Confirmed** human trafficking victim; and
 - ▶ Verify law enforcement case and NIC numbers remained the same.
- NCMEC:
 - ▶ Call **1-800-843-5678** or report online at <https://cmfc.missingkids.org/reportit>.
 - ▶ Provide the local law enforcement case and NIC numbers, critical information (such as diagnoses, medication needs, pertinent relationships, and if the missing young adult is a parent who either left child behind or is missing with the child.
 - ▶ Obtain confirmation and NCMEC numbers.



Prohibitions on Court Dismissal

As of Sept. 1, 2025, the Court is prohibited from dismissing the suit for a child or youth missing from care whose legal status is temporary managing conservatorship or permanent managing conservatorship (See Family Code, Sections **263.4012(a)** and **263.501(g)**).



Youth Turns 18 While Missing

- Notify law enforcement that the young adult turned 18 years of age while on missing status and is now a missing person.
- Advise if a **Suspected-Unconfirmed** or **Confirmed** human trafficking victim and update critical information.*
- Determine if ongoing efforts to recover should continue while the young adult remains eligible for Trial Independence (See **CPS Policy 6460**).
- If young adult contact is made after, staff provides the young adult with information regarding Extended Foster Care (See **CPS Policy 10400**).

* Critical information to share includes diagnoses, medication needs, pertinent relationships and if the missing young adult is a parent who left the child behind or is missing with the child.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
CCT	Care Coordination Team
CPI	Child Protective Investigations
CPS	Child Protective Services
CSE-IT	Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool Statewide
CSEY	Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth
DFPS	Department of Family and Protective Services
Missing Protocol	Missing Children Protocol
NCMEC	National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Appendix A: Glossary of Important Terms

AMBER Alert: Texas Department of Public Safety AMBER Alert Criteria requires requesting law enforcement agency to meet all the criteria below to activate the State AMBER Alert Network:

- Is this child or youth 17 years of age or younger, whose whereabouts are unknown, and whose disappearance law enforcement has determined to be unwilling which poses a credible threat to the child or youth's safety and health; and if abducted by a parent or legal guardian, was the abduction in the course of a murder or an attempted murder?

OR

- Is this child or youth 13 years of age or younger, who was taken (willingly or unwillingly) without permission from the care and custody of a parent or legal guardian by:
 - ▶ Someone unrelated and more than three years older, or
 - ▶ Another parent or legal guardian who attempted or committed murder at the time of the abduction?
- Is this child or youth in immediate danger of sexual assault, death, or serious bodily injury?
- Has a preliminary investigation verified the abduction and eliminated alternative explanations for the child or youth's disappearance?
- Is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public to help recover the child or youth, a suspect, or the vehicle used in the abduction?

Care Coordination Teams: These teams provide children and youth experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, sex trafficking and exploitation with a continuum of care that is non-punitive, responsive, and high-quality community-based services to meet their unique short-term and longer-term needs.

CCTs develop protocols for interagency collaboration and coordination of service intervention to reduce potential trauma to children or youth and families and improve services, while preserving and respecting the rights and obligations of each agency to pursue their respective mandates.

If a CCT exists in the legal or placement county, a referral must be made for Suspected-Unconfirmed and Confirmed victims of trafficking, as well as any child or youth with a Clear Concern CSE-IT result.

See the [Care Coordination Teams Overview](#).

Child Safety Alert List: The Texas Department of Public Safety maintains a Child Safety Check Alert List as part of the Texas Crime Information Center to help locate a child or the child's family for purposes of:

- Investigating a report of child abuse or neglect;
- Providing protective services to a family receiving family-based support services; or
- Providing protective services to the family of a child in DFPS managing conservatorship.

Children's Advocacy Center: Children's Advocacy Centers provide a safe, child-friendly environment where law enforcement, CPS, prosecution, and medical and mental health professionals may share information and develop effective, coordinated strategies sensitive to the needs of each unique case and child.

Local centers provide an array of child-focused services including:

- Multidisciplinary team case reviews;
- Joint investigation coordination;
- Specialized forensic interviews;
- Family advocacy and victim support;
- Trauma-focused therapy; and
- Medical evaluations.

When a CCT is not available, the local children's advocacy center's service arrays should be maximized as much as possible.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation – Identification Tool: CSE-IT, pronounced “see it”, is a [validated](#) screening tool designed to improve early identification of youth who are experiencing commercial sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking. The tool was developed by West Coast Children's Clinic and is currently used in Texas and multiple other states and across various sectors, including juvenile justice, education, advocate agencies, runaway/homeless youth agencies, and limited areas of child protection.

In Texas, a CSE-IT score of Clear Concern for a minor means that a child/youth meets criteria for mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse and service delivery, including referrals to Care Coordination, CSEY Advocate Services, and other specialized services available. By DFPS policy, any child or youth who scores a Clear Concern will be referred to the local CCT where in operation. As DFPS does not complete a CSE-IT on all children/youth in all stages of services, by DFPS policy any child or youth who is a Suspected-Unconfirmed or a Confirmed victim of human trafficking, as defined by DFPS, must be referred to a local CCT where in operation.

Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth Advocate Agency: CSEY advocate agencies are nonprofits that employ advocates to provide individualized 24/7 crisis response and ongoing trust-based relational support to child, youth, and young adult survivors (through age 21 or 24 depending on agency). CSEY advocates may also provide robust case management that is flexible to support and not duplicate, replace or interfere with efforts of other case managers and advocates.

CSEY advocates work collaboratively with other stakeholders in support of the victim-centered goals pursued by the survivor and their family, law enforcement, prosecutors, child welfare, juvenile justice, healthcare, and other partners. They help survivors gain the strength and empowerment needed to participate in investigation and prosecution of exploiters.

See the [Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth Advocate Services Overview](#).

Confirmed Unauthorized Placement: DFPS defines “confirmed unauthorized placement” as a situation in which DFPS has confirmed that a child or youth is residing in a location or placement that has not been approved or authorized by DFPS or the court of jurisdiction. Confirmation requires direct observation, reliable collateral contact or other credible evidence that the child or youth is living at the identified unauthorized location.



Reminder

Forensic and multi-forensic interviews should be strongly considered when working with suspected victims of trafficking.

Endangered Child: A child in foster care or DFPS conservatorship who is reported missing on two or more occasions in the 24-month period preceding.

Texas Department of Public Safety Endangered Child Criteria requires the following for law enforcement to properly enter the child or youth into the Texas Crime Information Center / National Crime Information Center system:

- Copies of prior missing person reports from law enforcement;
- A written statement from a parent, legal guardian, family member, or other authoritative source confirming prior incidents; and
- A written statement from a parent, legal guardian, family member, the DFPS, or other authoritative source confirming the missing child is in foster care or DFPS conservatorship.

Human Trafficking Federal and State Definitions:

Human Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act or labor or services.

- It is a crime for any person to knowingly engage or attempt to engage in human trafficking:
 - ▶ With the intent or knowledge that the trafficked person will be subjected to forced labor or services or engaged in prohibited sexual conduct; or
 - ▶ To benefit financially by receiving anything of value from participation in a venture that has subjected a person to forced labor or services or engaged a person in prohibited sexual conduct. See [Penal Code, Section 20A.02](#).
- Children can be victims of human trafficking regardless of their citizenship, residency, or alien or immigrant status.

Labor Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services by force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. See 22 U.S.C. 7102(9)(B).

- Knowingly causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a child to be trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under [Penal Code, Sections 20A.02\(a\)\(5\), \(6\), \(7\), or \(8\)](#); or
- The failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent a child from being trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under any of those sections. See [Family Code, Section 261.001\(1\)\(L\)](#).

Sex Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. See 22 U.S.C. 7102(10). For minors, the use of force, fraud, or coercion is not required. This includes the exchange of anything tangible for a sexual act or the promise of a sexual act.

- Compelling or encouraging the child in a manner to engage in sexual conduct as defined by [Penal Code, Section 43.01](#), including:
 - ▶ Compelling or encouraging the child in a manner that constitutes an offense of trafficking of persons under ;
 - ▶ Solicitation of prostitution under [Penal Code, Section 43.021](#); or
 - ▶ Compelling prostitution under [Penal Code, Section 43.05\(a\)\(2\)](#).See [Family Code, Section 261.001\(1\)\(G\)](#).
- Knowingly causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a child to be trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under [Penal Code, Sections 20A.02\(a\)\(5\), \(6\), \(7\), or \(8\)](#); or
- The failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent a child from being trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under any of those sections. See [Family Code, Section 261.001\(1\)\(L\)](#).

Human Trafficking Referral Survey: The [Trafficking Service Referral Survey](#) must be completed by the primary case worker when any of the following occur:

- A commercially sexually exploited youth or human trafficking advocacy agency referral is completed for a child or youth; and/or
- A CCT referral is completed in any stage of service; or
- A CCT opt-out official decision is made in any stage of service.

Human Trafficking Victimization:

Confirmed: DFPS term for a trafficking event when evidence supports the conclusion that the child or youth has been trafficked.

Suspected-Unconfirmed: DFPS term for a trafficking event when specific information regarding the child or youth and the surrounding circumstances creates a reasonable belief that the child or youth has been trafficked.

Located Youth: DFPS defines “located” as confirmation of the current whereabouts of a missing child or youth and DFPS has not yet assumed custody or verified the child or youth’s living arrangement at the identified location.

Missing Child Briefing: Facilitated by the Regional Missing Children’s Coordinator and required Quarterly (statutory languages but may be conducted more frequently.

See [CPS Policy 6461.31](#).

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: NCMEC is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation whose mission is to help find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization. NCMEC works with families, victims, private industry, law enforcement, and the public to assist with preventing child abductions, recovering missing children, and providing services to deter and combat child sexual exploitation.

NIC Number: A number generated from the National Crime Information Center Database unique for each runaway event reported. The same number should never be used twice.

Online Searches: An online search for presence and identification of leads on the location of the child or youth using agency-approved and available data applications including but not limited to social media accounts, TIERS, data broker, Spotlight, CLEAR, and IMPACT.

Recovered: DFPS defines recovered as the point in which DFPS has regained custody of a missing child or youth through one or more of the following actions:

- DFPS takes physical custody of the child or youth;
- The child or youth is returned to their authorized placement; or
- The child or youth remains in a confirmed unauthorized placement.



Note

***Confirmed** trafficking event supporting evidence **must** be more than just an allegation or suspicion and does not have to be a direct outcry from the child or youth.*

*A runaway episode, in and of itself, is **not** equal to a **Suspected-Unconfirmed** trafficking event.*

Recovery Plan: The recovery plan is a coordinated outline of all planned and active efforts to locate a youth and preliminary interventions and services to be initiated for the youth upon recovery. The plan can be revised throughout the missing episode, as needed, and will include, but is not limited to:

- Information regarding locating the child or youth and to inform the CSE-IT;
- Tasks assigned to recovery plan meeting participants;
- Potential children’s advocacy center multidisciplinary team engagement;
- Potential CCT engagement;
- Potential CSEY advocate agency engagement;
- Youth’s placement options upon recovery; and/or
- A communication plan which includes the frequency of follow-up meetings and needed recovery plan updates.

Recovery Plan Meeting: Within 2 business days of the missing event, the recovery plan meeting participants will develop recovery plan to locate a missing child or youth. The initial recovery plan meeting will set the frequency of ongoing meetings to update the recovery plan.

Regional Missing Children’s Coordinator: This person serves as a regional subject matter expert on the Missing Children’s Protocol and offers guidance and support to regional staff on expectations and tracks missing children and recoveries for their region, as well as schedules and facilitates the missing child briefing held quarterly at a minimum.

Runaway Prevention Plan: A runaway prevention plan should be developed for children in substitute care to address situations or circumstances that could lead to a child running away. This plan will help to provide accountability and clarity for all parties involved.

This plan should be developed in collaboration with the child, caregivers, relatives, and other supportive adults, case management staff, and the child’s caseworker. The plan should be strengths-based, realistic, and positive.

See CPS policies [6460](#) and [6461.11](#) and the [Runaway Prevention Resource Guide](#).

Spotlight: Spotlight is a victim identification tool primarily used by law enforcement and to aid in identifying child sex trafficking victims who were exploited online.

Trauma-Informed Care: A trauma-informed approach in policy, procedure, and practice that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma, identifies signs and symptoms of trauma, understands the potential paths for recovery, and actively seeks to prevent re-traumatization.

See more [Trauma-Informed Care](#) information.

Victim-Centered Care: An approach in policy, procedure, and practice that places the victim’s priorities, needs, and interests at the center of the work providing nonjudgmental assistance, with an emphasis on client self-determination, where appropriate, and assists victims in making informed choices to ensure victims’ feelings of safety and security are a priority while mitigating re-traumatization and supports victims’ rights, voice, and choice

Writ of Attachment: A court order used to seize property or a person, often in situations where there is a risk they will be moved or hidden before a final judgment. It is commonly used in child custody cases to ensure the child’s return or in property disputes to secure assets.

