

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COMMISSION



Management Audit
Department of Children and Family Services'
Search For Missing Children
December 2014

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Management Audit

Department of Children and Family Services' Search For Missing Children December 2014

RECOMMENDATIONS – 9

Implemented – 5

Accepted and Partially Implemented – 4

Background

The goal of the Department of Children and Family Services is to provide for the well-being of children (State wards) in foster or substitute care who cannot return home safely and also to support child-abuse prevention. The Illinois Administrative Code establishes the procedures to follow when a child for whom DCFS is legally responsible goes missing. DCFS procedures require that when a ward goes missing, caregivers contact the police, caseworker, and its Child Location and Support Unit for Missing Children (CLSU).

DCFS Procedure 329 titled “Locating and Returning Missing, Runaway, and Abducted Children” states *“The purpose of these procedures is to establish requirements and provide instructions for Department and Purchase of Service (POS) staff when children for whom the Department is legally responsible are reported or believed to be missing, runaway, or abducted.”* These procedures include the steps to follow when searching for a missing child, such as who to contact, amount of time to complete the contacts, and supervisory reviews that must be performed and documented.

The House of Representatives adopted Resolution Number 120 on May 22, 2013, directing the Office of the Auditor General to conduct a management audit of the Department of Children and Family Services’ (DCFS) search for missing children. The resolution directed the audit to determine the following for calendar years 2011 and 2012:

1. The number of children who were reported as missing, runaway, or abducted;
2. Whether reports of missing, runaway, or abducted children were made by DCFS to required parties in a timely manner; and
3. The steps followed by DCFS to locate and recover children reported as missing, runaway, or abducted, including complying with its rules and procedures.

MISSING CHILD

DCFS Procedure 329.20

“Missing child means any child up to 21 years of age for whom the Department is legally responsible who is missing without the permission of the child’s caregiver or that of the Department. The caregiver or the Department must have reason to suspect that the child has been abducted, has run away, or is considered to be otherwise missing.”

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Report Conclusions

DCFS' procedures place a high emphasis on timely action to reduce risks to the ward once reported missing from placement (see inset). As such, it is of critical importance that DCFS have strong controls to ensure agency management that the Department's actions pertaining to missing wards are timely and in compliance with procedures.

The audit found that compliance with procedures was not always documented, there was a lack of dates to determine if reporting was performed in a timely manner, data on missing children was not always reliable, and the Department had not evaluated the program to search for missing children.

MISSING CHILDREN ARE AT RISK

DCFS Procedure 329.10

"Children who are missing are at great risk of victimization and exploitation. . . . the child's worker is to consider a missing or abducted child as a major event that requires intensive intervention. . . . [w]orkers and their supervisors are required to notify the individuals, agencies and organizations described in these procedures upon learning that a child is missing." [emphasis added]

1. **Number of Missing Children:** DCFS did not report the number of wards missing in a given year. DCFS used daily lists of missing wards which showed about 230 wards were missing each day. These missing wards were *not all runaways* but included wards whose caregivers did not know their whereabouts.
 - DCFS estimated that over the two year audit period, there were approximately 26,500 to 29,200 run incidents involving about 2,800 to 3,100 State wards. However, these data sources had limitations.
 - Some wards may be missing for less than a day, while other wards may be missing for weeks or months.
2. **Timeliness of Reports to Required Parties:** When a ward goes missing, caseworkers need to report to required parties (such as police, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), guardian, courts) within the time stated in DCFS procedures, typically "*immediately*" or "*within two working days*."
 - To determine if wards were reported to required parties in a timely manner, the date when the caseworker *learned* that a ward was reported missing is required. However, this date was not documented by DCFS.
 - Without this date, it is not possible to determine whether caseworkers are meeting established time requirements for reporting missing wards to required parties (such as police, NCMEC, guardian, courts).
3. **Compliance:** In 47 of 100 cases sampled, caseworkers did not complete the DCFS missing child report within two working days, as required by procedure, but averaged six work days (longest took 98 work days).
 - In 96 of 100 cases sampled, auditors did not find evidence of supervisors' confirmation that the initial required reports (such as to police, NCMEC, guardian, courts) by caseworkers had been made.
 - When DCFS determines that a ward is high risk (such as age 13 or younger, medical condition, abducted), supervisors are required to receive daily progress reports from caseworkers. In all 20 high-risk cases sampled, auditors found insufficient documentation for these daily progress reports being made.

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In 2011-2012, there were over 26,000 wards reported to have gone missing. Generally, these wards were missing from placement and referred to by DCFS as Whereabouts Unknown (or WUK).

DCFS procedures do not distinguish between wards that go missing chronically and those that go missing rarely or just once. The Child Intake and Recovery Unit (CLSU was renamed CIRU) program manager said he would also like data that can show which wards are truly missing and which ones are just not where they are supposed to be.

Furthermore, some wards are older, aged 18 and older (adults), who are in independent living facilities which are not subject to daily monitoring but are checked periodically. The same procedures that apply to younger wards also apply to these older wards which may not always fit the circumstances.

Not all the search procedures were entirely clear to some caseworkers; for example, one considered the term *immediately* in DCFS procedures to mean within 24 hours, another considered it to be as soon as practical given other priorities, while others thought a month could be immediate for individuals who were in independent living. DCFS could provide clarification and training on its expectations, and procedures may be updated.

The Management Audit made nine recommendations pertaining to these issues. DCFS agreed with the recommendations and stated that it would review and revise its procedures and provide training to staff.

Recommendations

- 1. DCFS should report the number of missing wards annually to its management, as well as other information which may be needed for management to effectively carry out its responsibilities regarding missing children.**

Findings: House Resolution Number 120 asked for *"The number of children who were reported as missing, runaway, or abducted"* in calendar years 2011 and 2012. DCFS did not have a report on the total number of wards missing during a week, month, or year. Consequently, DCFS was unable to provide an accurate number of wards who were missing in calendar years 2011 and 2012. Depending on the data source used by DCFS, the number of times wards that went missing over the two years audited ranged from 26,491 to 29,201 and involved 2,773 to 3,126 wards. However, each of these data sources had limitations and was incomplete.

Auditors reviewed four sources of data in an attempt to identify the number of wards that were reported as missing in 2011 and 2012. However, each of the four sources had limitations which prevented the auditors from making the determination required by the Resolution. These four sources of data were:

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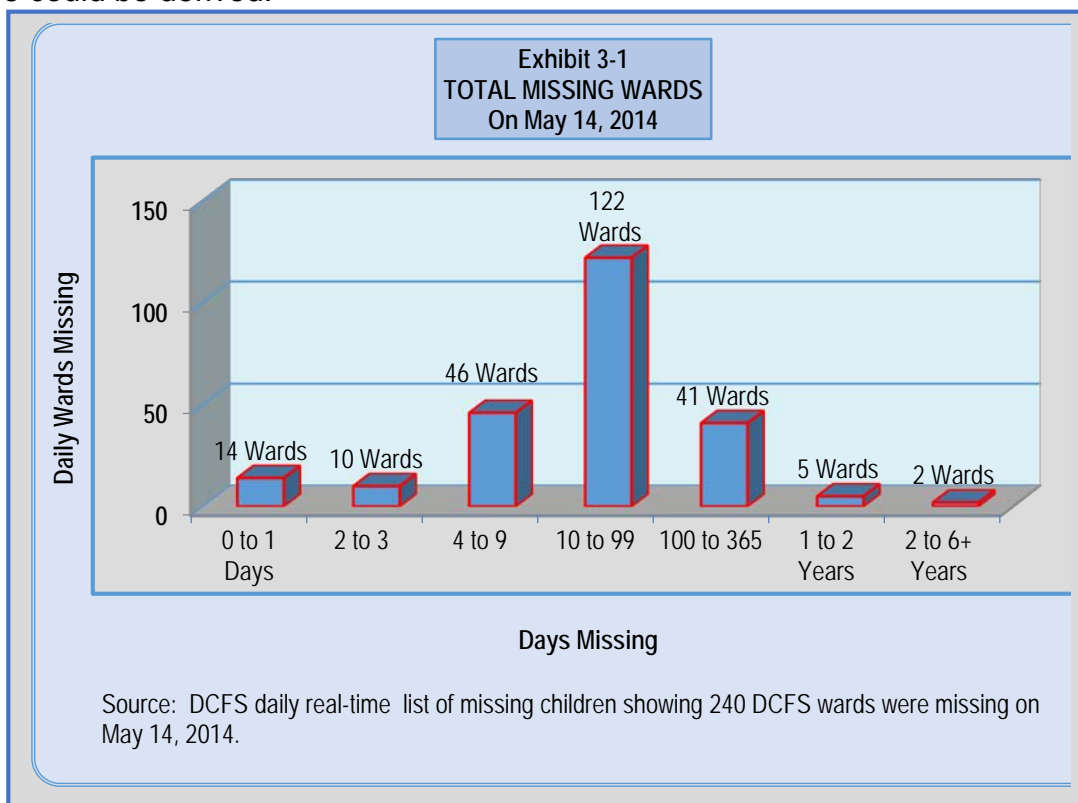
1. List of CFS 906 payment forms, which are completed by caseworkers to stop payments to providers when a ward goes missing;
2. Daily lists of missing wards used by the CLSU;
3. The Missing Child Database (MCD) which was operational during the audit period but is no longer used; and
4. The Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) which is the Department-wide case management system, into which data from the MCD was transferred in April 2013, before this audit began.

CFS 906 Listing

A CFS 906 form is used to stop paying for room and board to a provider when a ward was missing. There were over 10,000 CFS 906 forms completed for wards that had gone missing during the audit period of 2011-2012. However, the total number of times that wards had gone missing was 26,491 to 29,201 according to DCFS data discussed below. Auditors concluded that the CFS 906 forms would not offer a complete count of missing wards.

Daily Lists

During the audit period, MCD generated two real-time lists of missing wards for its CLSU unit which are now generated by SACWIS: (1) wards for whom a CFS 906 has not yet been completed because they have generally been reported missing for a short time (e.g., 1 or 2 days), and (2) wards that are missing longer and the CFS 906 form has been filed to stop paying for their room and board. These active lists are not retained from which an annual figure could be derived.



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The CIRU administrator indicated that approximately 230 wards were missing on any day with about 40 being new wards reported missing each day. While some wards run away and return within a day or two, other wards have been missing for more than a year (see Exhibit 3-1 which summarizes the length of time wards were missing on May 14, 2014).

A sample of 100 run incidents included 67 cases which showed the date when the ward went missing and the date when the ward was found. The average number of days these wards were missing was nearly one month (29 days), with a range of less than 1 day to 160 days. In one-third (33) of the cases sampled, lack of specific missing and found dates prevented auditors from determining how long the ward had been missing. The date when the ward was found was not available for some sampled cases because when a CFS 906 payment form was added to the MCD, DCFS said all the disposition dates for previous runs automatically changed to the date of the **newest** CFS 906 form. DCFS said this system error became known when the MCD data was transferred to SACWIS on April 27, 2013, and has been corrected. Now when a ward is found the date appears in the "Disposition" tab in SACWIS.

Missing Child Database

The Missing Child Database (MCD) was used by the CLSU during the audit period. However, in April 2013, the data in the MCD was transferred into the agency-wide SACWIS system and the MCD was no longer used. The MCD was a stand-alone database which did not have required fields like SACWIS.

The MCD contained 26,491 incidents of missing wards during the two-year audit period. A DCFS official acknowledged that the MCD database had data integrity issues and did not provide a complete count of run incidents. DCFS officials stated that the MCD had long text strings (notes) which made it difficult to correctly match all of the information for a specific run when the data was transferred from MCD to SACWIS.

SACWIS

SACWIS is the agency's current information system which shows 29,201 incidents of wards reported missing in 2011 and 2012. However, this count is not accurate since the MCD did not assign each run incident a unique number, whereas SACWIS does. SACWIS assigns each run incident a unique Report ID number.

A review also found that 64 of 10,012 Report ID numbers were assigned multiple CFS 1014's and that 92 wards, who had a CFS 906 form completed to stop their room and board payments, were not included in the SACWIS missing children list. These types of data issues also impacted the accuracy and reliability of missing ward data generated by the SACWIS system.

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While daily lists may serve the Department's needs to monitor and track missing wards on a given day, capturing this information on an annual basis would provide useful information to DCFS management. Such information could identify the following:

- If the total number of missing wards is increasing or decreasing annually,
- If the agency has allocated sufficient resources to handle missing wards,
- If there are facilities from which wards run away more or less often,
- If some facilities need additional monitoring or corrective action, and
- If DCFS needs to make any policy changes regarding missing wards.

DCFS Response: The Department agrees that enhancement to management reports and reporting concerning missing children is necessary. By June 30, 2015, the Department intends to develop and implement an integrated set of monthly, quarterly and annual management reports on missing children. The users of the reports will include Department and Purchase of Service (POS) agencies' managers and supervisors.

The reports will present data on missing children in various views, including but not necessarily limited to:

- By the living arrangements from which children went missing;
- By the providers with which children were placed; and
- By the agency to which primary case management was assigned.

It is intended the report series will also include demographic-based reports on children who went missing as well as trend reports that the Department and its POS provider partners may use to enhance child and youth safety, stability, permanency, and well-being.

DCFS Updated Response: Partially Implemented. The Department agreed to enhance management reports and reporting concerning missing children and remains on target for the June 30, 2015 implementation date. Currently Department divisions of Operations and Information Technology are in process with development of an integrated set of monthly, quarterly and annual management reports on missing children. In addition, the Department has partnered with Casey Family Programs and has launched the Illinois Rapid Response team, which has been working to address key areas of practice and program development to improve Department outcomes and to better serve the children and families of Illinois. One of the key areas of improvement is that of expanded data capabilities and understanding.

In addition, the CIRU submits daily reports on missing children and weekly reports on child protection warrant status to senior Department management staff and regional administrators.

2. DCFS should prevent overpayments by ensuring that CFS 906 forms are completed, submitted, and entered in a timely manner.

Findings: DCFS pays for the expenses of wards that are under its care, including for their room and board, their education, along with other services. When a ward enters a new

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placement, or is absent from placement without authorization, caseworkers complete the CFS 906 Placement/Payment Authorization form to either pay the provider or to stop paying the provider. Some wards go missing repeatedly, including running a second time on the very same day they were found. If this occurs, a second CFS 906 form may not be completed and the original CFS 906 form may remain in effect to not pay the provider. Once a State ward goes missing for over 24 hours, DCFS procedures require completing a CFS 906 form to stop paying for their room and board.

DCFS uses an automated system called the Board Payment System (BPS) to pay for ward's care (room, board). The BPS calculates account balances twice a month. Each time the BPS runs, it recalculates all payments and claims for the entire fiscal year in order to collect (or pay) any over/underpayment found since the previous calculation. Overpayments are collected in future months and **uncollected** overpayments for fiscal years 2011 and 2012 totaled approximately \$33,421 for 65 wards (none of whom were in the sample) as of February 13, 2014. Overpayments could have been caused by filing a CFS 906 late for the run, or by other factors such as relocating to different homes, changing services, or changes in expenses, such as for education.

Auditors asked DCFS to check payments to providers for 5 of the 100 cases in the sample. In all five cases, DCFS either correctly paid the provider or recouped the overpayment. For three wards, DCFS correctly paid the providers for the number of days that the wards were in placement. For the remaining two cases, DCFS overpaid but fully recouped the overpayment in the subsequent two months.

Auditors identified significant differences between the CFS 906 submission date on the CFS 1014 and the date that the Case Assignment and Placement Unit (CAPU) noted as receiving the CFS 906 form. When asked about this difference, a DCFS official stated the CAPU was behind in entering CFS 906 information by approximately 5,000 to 6,000 forms late in 2012 after losing staff due to budget cuts. During this time, providers continued to be paid which may have caused additional overpayments due to the backlogged CFS 906 forms, but DCFS stated that overpayments were recouped later. DCFS officials said that CAPU has entered backlogged forms and current forms are entered timely.

DCFS Updated Response: Implemented. Improvement continues on submission and entry of CFS 906, Placement/Payment Authorization forms. The revision of Procedures 329, issued in May 2015, stresses to all Department and Purchase of Service agency caseworkers, supervisors, and managers the importance of timely completion, submittal, and entry of CFS 906 forms related to children who go missing from placement and when children return to a safe placement. The revised Procedures 329 stress' child and youth safety and correct payments to providers as two primary reasons underpinning the need for correct, timely submittal and entry of CFS 906 forms.

Additionally, staff of the Child Intake and Recovery Unit (CIRU) continue to monitor the submission of CFS 906 forms for missing children reported to CIRU on a daily basis. CIRU staff contact the assigned DCFS or POS agency caseworker and supervisor when a CFS 906 form is not submitted in a timely manner. CIRU staff will communicate with the assigned

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caseworker and supervisor daily until the required CFS 906 form is submitted and entered. The contact between CIRU staff and field staff is documented by CIRU personnel completing the contact.

3. DCFS should emphasize to all involved in the reporting and locating of missing children of the need to accurately enter information into case files and to correct discrepancies when identified.

Findings: The audit identified data issues which impact the accuracy of data on missing wards. Some case files showed different dates for when the ward was reported missing, such as in the CFS 1014 Missing Children Recovery Report, the CFS 906 payment form completed to stop payment, or in the SACWIS case notes. DCFS stated the reason for the differences could be typos, or dates entered by different workers, or involve a ward who ran away multiple times but only some of the incidents were recorded (i.e., ward went missing, was brought back but went missing again, such as within hours).

- **Multiple Dates.** In the random sample of 100 cases, DCFS documents showed more than one date for when 28 wards went missing in different DCFS documents. For 4 of these 28 cases, the date that the ward went missing varied by at least 10 days in agency documents, including a 43-day difference between dates recorded for one missing ward.

The date a ward was last seen is recorded in multiple locations, such as the CFS 906, the CFS 1014, the SACWIS screen showing the missing child report, and the SACWIS case notes. A DCFS official stated that the dates should match but was unable to give a reason for the discrepancies except to suggest that caseworkers might have entered the current date when completing a form instead of the date the ward went missing. Some discrepancies may also have been typographical errors.

- **Data Organization.** The audit found 76 of 100 cases sampled contained case notes in SACWIS which did not appear to be grouped with the correct report. The case notes in MCD were not always separated for each individual run incident. The MCD had notes in one long string and SACWIS put these notes in "containers" within different Report ID's so information about a particular run would be under a particular number.
- **Abducted.** During 2011-2012, DCFS classified 61 of the more than 29,000 total run incidents as abductions. This audit found that DCFS misclassified 40 of these 61 cases as being abductions.
 - DCFS documents, such as the CFS 906 form used to stop room and board payments and/or SACWIS case notes, showed that 40 of these 61 cases were wards who were missing, not abducted.
 - Agency officials noted that no ward had been abducted by a stranger either during the audit period, or in recent memory, but were taken by parents or family members lacking custody.

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- Generally, a child who was not really abducted was found or returned quickly.
- **Multiple CFS 1014 Forms.** There were other issues which showed that the data had errors. As noted, each Report ID number should contain information on only one incident (e.g., one CFS 1014 Missing Children Recovery Report). Auditors identified 64 of 10,012 Report ID numbers that contained multiple CFS 1014 reports – 61 had two CFS 1014's and 3 had three CFS 1014's.

For reports to be useful and effective, the data contained in them must be accurate. DCFS needs to emphasize to employees the importance of entering data correctly and require supervisors to check the data to ensure that it is in fact entered accurately.

DCFS Updated Response: Partially Implemented. The May 2015, revision of Procedure 329 re-enforce to Department and POS agency staff the importance of accurate information concerning missing children and what action needs to be taken when information discrepancies are identified.

Additionally the Department has designed a continuous quality improvement (CQI) approach to periodically assess and evaluate the accuracy and integrity of data on missing children by Department staff and staff of POS agencies and providers. The CQI approach will be targeted for implementation on a quarterly basis starting during the first quarter of state fiscal year 2016.

4. DCFS should improve controls to ensure that the CIRU is immediately informed when a DCFS caseworker is notified that a ward has gone missing, as per Procedure 329.

Findings: DCFS Procedure requires caregivers to notify the police, the caseworker, and the CLSU (now renamed to CIRU) if the whereabouts of a ward become unknown. However, auditors did not find that the CLSU was always notified when a ward went missing.

The CLSU (now CIRU) was the agency's support unit when searching for missing wards and sent caseworkers the CFS 1014 missing child report to complete as they began searching for missing wards. Caseworkers record the dates as they initially contact/notify/report the missing wards to police, NCMEC, parents/guardian, court, etc. The CLSU was also tasked with sending a weekly follow up form for caseworkers to complete, called the CFS 1014, Part II, Location Efforts.

Although DCFS procedure states that the caregiver should immediately report a missing ward to the CLSU, the date that the CLSU was notified was not

REPORTING REQUIRED FOR CAREGIVERS

DCFS Procedure 329.30(a)

"Caregivers, including foster parents, relative caregivers, and staff of residential facilities, shall immediately report any missing child/youth to:

- 1) The local law enforcement;*
- 2) The child's case manager/worker; and*
- 3) The Helpline of the Child Location and Support Unit for Missing Children (1-866-503-0184).*

Caregivers shall obtain the number of the missing person report from the law enforcement officer taking the report and provide the report number to the CLSU Helpline."

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found in 39 of 100 cases sampled. A lack of notification to the CLSU can prevent or delay the search for missing children as the CLSU oversaw the search for missing children.

DCFS Updated Response: Implemented. As a means to improve controls to ensure respective staff are informed when children are missing the Department automated fields in SACWIS to require documentation of dates the CIRU and assigned caseworker are informed a child is missing from placement. The Department successfully implemented this and other enhancements to the SACWIS case management system on March 28, 2015 to improve documentation when children are gone from placement or considered missing. The system changes were initiated to address audit findings as well as promote enhanced efforts for locating this population of children and youth. The changes will assist both CIRU and child welfare specialist (CWS) staff with improved monitoring of location efforts and will provide a more accurate checks and balances to assist CIRU and CWS staff in their practice according to Procedures 329.

5. **DCFS should establish (1) a field in SACWIS to require caseworkers to enter the date and time when they first learned about a missing ward; (2) procedures for the caseworker to acknowledge notification of the missing ward; and (3) a process to ensure that searches are conducted for missing wards in a timely manner, including after business hours or on weekends.**

Findings: The date when the caseworker first **learned** about a ward being missing was not documented. Knowing the date/time when the caseworker learned is important to determining if workers contacted the required parties (e.g., police, NCMEC, parents/guardian, courts) in a timely manner.

DCFS procedures state that when a caseworker learns that a ward is missing, the caseworker shall "immediately" contact required parties. Auditors asked where they could find the date when the worker learned about the missing ward. DCFS said on April 1, 2014, that *"All of this information should be recorded in the SACWIS case notes, there is not a specific area in the notes for the documentation, but it should be documented."*

However, in the sample, auditors did not find a date recorded in the applicable SACWIS reports or in the case notes for when the caseworker first learned the ward was missing.

WHEN CASEWORKER "LEARNS"

DCFS Procedure 329.30(b)

"When a worker . . . learns that a child/youth for whom the Department is legally responsible . . . is missing, the worker shall immediately:

- 1) Contact law enforcement . . . to verify that a missing person report has been filed [or file one if needed]. . . .*
- 2) Contact the CLSU Helpline*
- 3) Contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)*
- 4) Notify the child's legal parents, guardian*
- 5) Complete the CFS 119 Unusual Incident Report (UIR). . . . [in two working days]*
- 6) Once the child has been missing for 24 hours, complete the CFS 906*
- 7) Request the Juvenile Court of Jurisdiction to issue a Child Protection Warrant within two working days." [emphasis added]*

If the CLSU is the first to learn that a ward is missing, it notifies both the caseworker and his/her supervisor by email and sends an electronic CFS 1014 missing child report (Part I or

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Initial) to complete. However, there is no place on the CFS 1014 to document when the caseworker learned about the ward being missing.

One respondent in our survey noted that some workers have a very high caseload and are constantly in the field, or court, or visiting clients. These other assignments may delay beginning the search immediately for missing wards, as required by procedures.

DCFS Procedure 329 states that all those involved need to work aggressively to find a missing child: "Supervisors and workers are expected to work very aggressively to locate a missing child and return the child to an approved placement" as children who are missing are at great risk of victimization and exploitation. A step needs to be added for the caseworker or his/her supervisor to reply to the CLSU to indicate if they anticipate any delays (such as due to scheduled days off, training, or other assignments), so the CLSU is informed and can pursue alternatives if necessary.

DCFS Updated Response: Implemented. As part of the SACWIS system enhancements a data field in which the date and time the assigned caseworker or supervisor first learned that a child is missing was added. Additionally the requirement for a worker to acknowledge notification of a missing ward has been included in the revision of Procedures 329 which has been issued. The requirement will be expounded further in the mandatory training occurring during the fourth quarter of state fiscal year 2015 (April 1 - June 30, 2015).

The Department requires immediate reporting of a missing child to local law enforcement, which has responsibility and resources to search for missing children, including after hours and on non-state of Illinois work days. The Department and its POS agency partners have staff "on-call" during non-business hours that are available to assist law enforcement personnel should they locate a missing child. In addition, the CIRU is available 24 hours per day seven days a week to assist law enforcement in efforts to locate a missing child.

- 6. DCFS should report the missing wards to required parties within the time established in its procedures, including to NCMEC, juvenile courts, and parents/guardians and require supervisors to sign-off on the CFS 1014 to document their review.**

Findings: Audit Determination Number Two asked whether reporting requirements were completed in a timely manner. Auditors randomly sampled 100 cases with a completed CFS 1014 missing child report during the audit period. The average age of the wards in the sample was 17, with the youngest being age 13 and the oldest being age 20. The sample included 20 wards that were marked as high risk, including wards that had several risk factors (e.g., mental health issues, pregnant, parenting).

Date CLSU Notified

Auditors were unable to use the date the CLSU was notified to assess the timeliness of DCFS actions. In 39 of 100 cases sampled, the date the CLSU was notified about a missing

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ward was not available. Auditors found that in 34 of these 39 cases the CLSU was notified but could not determine the date when it was notified, while in the remaining 5 cases there was no evidence in the file to support that the CLSU was notified at all.

Second, if a caseworker learned of the missing ward before the CLSU was notified, and auditors had used the (later) date when the CLSU was notified, testing would not have been accurate as the caseworker could have had time to complete the initial reporting requirements before the CLSU was even notified.

Finally, if the CLSU was notified of a missing ward before the caseworker was notified, auditors were still not able to determine *when* the caseworker learned about the missing child.

Other Compliance Testing

The audit found other non-compliance issues in our sample of 100 cases. For example there was a lack of documentation to show if photographs were provided to police and if the LEADS (Law Enforcement Agency Data System) number was obtained in a timely manner, although 93 of 100 cases sampled had a LEADS number in the file, as required by procedure.

Likewise, for 76 of 100 cases sampled, auditors could not determine if the missing ward's photograph was provided to police as it was not noted on the CFS 1014 missing child report. For the remaining 24 cases, there was a date when the photo was provided to police but there was no date when the caseworker learned of the missing ward; however, auditors could not determine if the photographs were submitted to police in a timely manner (i.e., "immediately").

DCFS Updated Response: Implemented. The revision of Procedure 329 provide specific instructions to Department and POS agency staff (including staff of substitute care providers) concerning the requirements and importance of timely notifications concerning missing children. The revision of Procedures 329 also clarifies the specific responsibilities of supervisors to monitor, supervise, and approve all required activities concerning missing children, including requirements for documenting such supervision in one or more supervisory notes in SACWIS. Additionally the CIRU monitors these activities, as this is part of their current monitoring responsibilities for missing child location efforts.

Finally, the CQI approach discussed in the response to Recommendation #3 above will include one or more items focused on:

- Timely completion of all required notifications; and
- Compliance with all staff supervision requirements.

7. DCFS should ensure that all its internal forms are completed in a timely manner as specified in DCFS procedures, including the CFS 1014 Missing Children

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Recovery Report. In addition, DCFS should debrief missing wards when they are found, and document the interview.

Findings: Caseworkers are required by procedure to complete internal DCFS reports and forms on missing wards; however, the audit sample found that these reports and forms were not always completed within the time specified in DCFS procedures (Exhibit 4-1):

Exhibit 4-1 AGENCY FORMS FOR MISSING CHILDREN SAMPLED Calendar Years 2011 and 2012							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Requirement	Time to Report (Procedures)	Total	N/A	Unable to Determine	Completed Timely	Completed Late or Not Completed	
CFS 1014 Part I	2 Working Days	100	0	0	53	47	47%
CFS 1014 Part III	2 Working Days	100	4 ¹	0	94	2	2%
Medical Exam	Upon Return	100	4 ¹	0	29	67	70%
CFS 680-A	Upon Return	100	4 ¹	0	21	75	78%
Note: ¹ Two CFS 1014 (Part III) Recovery reports were not issued, 1 was pending and 1 was marked "Entered in Error."							
Source: Sample of DCFS missing children.							

- **CFS 1014 (Part I) Missing Children Recovery Report** – Procedures call for the caseworkers to complete and return Part I of the CFS 1014 missing child report to CLSU within two working days.
- **CFS 1014 (Part III) Missing Children Recovery Report** – Procedures call for the caseworker to complete and return Part III of the CFS 1014 to CLSU within two working days from the date of receipt.
- **Medical Exam** – Procedures call for the caseworker to schedule a medical exam when the ward has been returned. To determine if a medical exam was scheduled, auditors tested whether the box associated with the exam was checked on the CFS 1014.

CHILD DEBRIEFING (CFS 680-A Form)

DCFS Procedures 329: Appendix C

Questions included:

- Why did you leave your previous placement?
- Did anyone encourage you to leave?
- Did you tell anyone you were leaving before you left? If so, who did you tell?
- How much money did you have with you when you left?
- Where did you go?
- With whom did you stay while gone?
- How did you survive (i.e., Where did you sleep? Where did you get food?)
- Did you get sick or were you physically hurt or injured while you were gone?
- Were you sexually active while away?
- Have you ever runaway before? Why?
- What was the best thing about being away?
- What was the worst thing about being away?
- Do you think you might run away again in the future?
- Is there anything I can do right now to make you feel safe so you won't run away again?

- **CFS 680-A Debriefing Form** – Procedures call for the caseworker to conduct a thorough follow-up interview with the ward when the ward has returned. After a ward is located, caseworkers are required to debrief (interview) the ward using a CFS 680-

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A form. To determine if this was done, auditors tested whether the box associated with the 680-A form was tick marked on the CFS 1014 (Part III) Recovery report.

DCFS Response: The revision of Procedure 329 targeted to be issued by March 15, 2015 will include specific requirements regarding timely completion of forms required by Procedures 329, including the CFS 1014 form.

Also, special emphasis will be placed in the revision of Procedures 329 on the importance of assigned caseworkers or supervisors de-briefing children and youth when they are located and in a safe placement, and documenting the de-briefing on the CFS 680-A, Missing Child De-Briefing Form. The Department will also ask OITS to add a data field in SACWIS where a worker could explain why a child was not de-briefed. Further, the Department will review and, if necessary, revise the CFS 680-A form as part of the revision of Procedures 329. The goal will be to make the form more efficient to complete.

Finally, the CQI approach discussed in the response to Recommendation #3 above will include one or more items focused specifically on the timely completion of required forms and compliance with de-briefing requirements in Procedures 329.

DCFS Updated Response: Implemented. The CFS 1014 form and CFS 680-A debriefing form processes were automated in the 3/28/15 SACWIS release noted above in response to recommendations #4 and #5. As part of the automation, a supervisor process was included to better ensure supervisory oversight of the documentation of both tools in accordance with Procedures 329. The revision of Procedure 329 emphasizes the specific requirements regarding timely completion of forms.

- 8. DCFS should comply with its written procedures which require that supervisory meetings with caseworkers be documented when searching for missing wards. Supervisors should review the documents completed by caseworkers and sign off to demonstrate their review.**

Findings: Supervisors generally did not review caseworkers' reports and contacts when wards went missing. DCFS procedures require that when a supervisor is notified by a caseworker that a ward is missing, the supervisor will immediately confirm that the caseworker has completed all the required reports and contacts (e.g., police, parent or guardian, NCMEC, juvenile court) and assist in developing strategies to locate the ward quickly.

Supervisors should continue to meet with caseworkers each week if the ward is still missing per procedure, although for high-risk wards (e.g., age 13 or younger, have medical condition, abducted, pregnant, parenting) a daily progress report is required from the caseworker.

DCFS Procedure requires that all the supervisory meetings with caseworkers must be documented: Auditors' random sample of 100 cases found that 95% of the cases had insufficient documentation of supervisory review.

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- **Initial Meeting/Confirmation:** In 96 of 100 cases (96%) randomly sampled, there was no documentation that the supervisor confirmed the worker had completed the initial notifications required by DCFS Procedure.
- **Weekly Meetings:** In 83 of 87 applicable cases randomly sampled, there was insufficient documentation of weekly meetings between the caseworker and supervisor.
- **High Risk Child:** In all 20 cases randomly sampled that involved wards that were high risk (e.g., pregnant, parenting, mental health issues) there was insufficient documentation of daily progress reports between the caseworker and supervisor, as required by Procedure.

DCFS Updated Response: Partially Implemented.

This recommendation was addressed in the revision of Procedure 329 and clarifies requirements for supervision of staff's compliance with notification, search and de-briefing requirements, including when and where supervisors must document:

- Supervisory meetings with caseworkers; and
- Supervisory review and approval of required documents.

The training effort to be employed during the first quarter of FY16 will also clearly address the requirements of supervisors in guiding and monitoring staff efforts to locate and recover children missing from placement. Additionally the CQI approach discussed in the response to Recommendation #3 above will include one or more items focused specifically on compliance with supervision requirements in Procedure 329.

9. Given the lack of documentation and noncompliance found in this audit, DCFS should:

- **Provide training to caseworkers and supervisors on missing children;**
- **Review its search procedures for missing children for possible modifications; and**
- **Give the CIRU (or another unit within DCFS) the responsibility to monitor actions taken by caseworkers and supervisors to report and locate missing children, and to report to management the degree to which the Department's policies and procedures are being followed.**

Findings: The CLSU (now CIRU) supports and monitors the search for missing wards. The caseworkers contact people and places where the ward may have run away to previously (e.g., "check grandma's home"), or check other places where the ward could have currently gone, such as to relatives, friends, neighbors, or even jail. This work to search for missing wards is in addition to the caseworker's regular workload, which is compounded further by some wards running away frequently.

Given that searching for a missing ward is a priority per Department procedure, particularly because of the risks that missing wards face, the Department needs stronger controls and

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better oversight, especially given the lack of documentation and compliance that was found during this audit. This may include strengthening the role and responsibilities of the CLSU (CIRU) to (1) ensure that the search for missing children is performed as prescribed in DCFS procedure so that the search is completed in a timely manner, (2) provide routine information to DCFS management on the Department's efforts to search for missing children, and (3) report on both the compliance and effectiveness of search efforts.

Auditors asked DCFS if it had conducted any internal evaluations or assessments to see if workers were complying with its procedures and meeting timelines. DCFS said that its missing children unit, the CIRU, had been corresponding with supervisors about the missing reports:

In most cases this is difficult data to capture because of the fluidity of the population, however CIRU has correspondence with the case manager and the supervisor about what is missing on the kids that are missing or have returned. This is in the form of emails that is sent out to workers and supervisors when kids go missing or returned. CIRU has been working on developing a check list for workers when kids are missing. [emphasis added]

Auditors requested the checklist that DCFS mentioned was being developed on April 1, 2014, and learned that as of September 24, 2014, it was still in draft form.

DCFS has not conducted formal training for caseworkers on how to complete its forms. Formal training has not been provided in the past 10 years and should be provided to ensure that its procedures are being followed, that the CIRU is notified immediately when a ward goes missing, and that other procedures are understood and followed so that the search can commence immediately in compliance with procedures.

In addition, the process for searching for missing children has not been internally reviewed in years and CIRU managers have not conducted an assessment to determine if caseworkers are complying with procedures. Work that is not reviewed by managers can appear to employees to be lower management priority, which searching for missing children is not. Given the risks posed to wards who go missing, DCFS management needs to be informed whether those involved in the reporting of and search for missing wards are complying with Departmental policies and procedures.

DCFS Updated Response: Accepted and Partially Implemented. The Department remains committed to these enhancements in effort to provide sustainable quality care for this population of children and youth as with all children in the Illinois Foster Care System. In response to the audit findings and recommended improvements the Department initiated revised procedures, has begun efforts to augment procedures with mandatory staff training, has enhanced the automated case management system and has reinforced the CIRU operating procedures manual to ensure CIRU staff closely monitor efforts to locate and recover children and youth who are gone from their placement, or otherwise considered missing. The Department has completed a comprehensive review of all aspects of the response to missing children. Specifically the following improvements are underway or have been fulfilled because of the review.

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- Policy and procedures, including but not limited to notification, search, and payment procedures; (COMPLETED May 2015);
- Substitute care contract requirements and performance measures (COMPLETED);
- All information system functions and requirements (COMPLETED);
- Management reports and reporting; (IN PROCESS - planned implementation June 30, 2015);
- Functions and staffing of CIRU (COMPLETED);
- Training for Department and POS staff, including new staff training and periodic on-going “refresher training” for all staff; (IN PROCESS - planned implementation first quarter of state fiscal year 2016); and,
- Continuous quality improvement approach and activities (IN PROCESS - planned implementation first quarter of state fiscal year 2016).