

# PRACTICE GUIDE

## Safety and support plans – young people frequently absent or missing

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### **Safety and support planning for young people who are frequently absent or missing from their placement**

This practice resource provides practice prompts for working with children and young people who are frequently absent from their placement or who have been missing for an extended period of time and have returned. The practice prompts will assist in engaging the child or young person in conversations to lead to a collaboratively developed safety and support plan with an identified responsive network of people around the young person.

Children and young people who have been hurt or traumatised by significant adults in their lives can sometimes behave in ways that may place them in unsafe situations. Developing safety and support plans with children and young people and their network allows for everyone to be clear about future worries that need to be addressed and what everyone needs to do to increase safety should the child or young person leave their care arrangement.

Refer to the following definitions:

- An absent child is a child who is absent for a short period without permission, and where the child's location is known or can be quickly established.
- A missing child is any child whose location is unknown and there are fears for the safety or concern for the welfare of that child.

### **Practice prompts for safety and support planning**

To begin development of the safety and support plan, engage with the young person and:

- have open and clear discussion about the reasons for leaving their placement
- talk about the triggers or motivations they have for leaving their placement
- talk about who is worried and why they are worried when the child or young person leaves their placement
- talk about unsafe places and clearly explain why they are unsafe
- identify resources children and young people could use to advise of their whereabouts and seek assistance (mobile phone, go card, important phone numbers, health service contacts)
- discuss the risks and impacts of alcohol and drug use and unsafe sex practices
- help the child or young person identify and record safe network members and safe places they can go to get assistance.

Developed collaboratively, the safety and support plan is a written agreement between the department, the young person, and their support network, and will include goal statements and action steps written in clear language. Everyone who is part of the plan must understand what the worries are if a child or young person is frequently absent or missing, and their roles in responding. The plan is monitored, and will be reviewed and revised over time.

**Other resources or tools:**

- Safety and support plan template – located in CSPM Forms and templates section
  - Circles of Safety and Support resource – located in the CSPM Framework for practice section
  - CSPM Practice Paper – A framework for practice with 'high-risk' young people (12-17 years)
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**Version history**

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