

St. Mary's County Non- Public School Bus Transportation

Recommendations for Responding to a Report of a Missing Child

WHAT DO I DO IF A CHILD IS MISSING ?

1. **STAY CALM.** Have the parent contact neighbors, friends, spouse, siblings and anyone who may know where the child may be. Invite a friend or acquaintance with a "calm" manner to be with the parent or guardian. ***The Transportation Dispatcher will call the Bus Contractor and Bus Driver from the Non-Public School bus listing to inquire information on the child. (When did the driver last see the child and drop off location). Notify parent immediately with the information.)***
2. **Conduct a telephone search.** Have the parent or guardian call **family, friends and relatives** who may wish to help. Encourage them to use their telephones to make inquiry calls so the parent's or guardian's line will remain free for incoming calls. If they have to leave the house, have an answering machine on the line or have a friend or neighbor take incoming calls.
3. Have their friends and relatives **conduct a basic land search of the neighborhood area** while the **dispatcher is making a police occurrence report.** With family and friends, try to recall the present and past few days of family situations and activities (a recent argument or disciplinary action could be the reason for hiding).

SUGGESTED PLACES TO CHECK

- Your home and property, including the attic for well hidden children. Do not disturb or move anything in your child's room until police have checked it. If you do, you or your family and friends may disturb valuable evidence.
- Homes of your child's friends, neighbors, and relatives.
- Ex-spouse's home, if you are separated.
- Past and present baby-sitters.
- School and school yard (the child may have after school activities or detention).
- Community Center.
- Local Sports Facility.
- Parks or Play Areas.
- Shopping Centers and Corner Stores.
- Video Arcades.
- Hobby Shops.
- Bicycle Shops.
- Bus Terminals.

FOR SUSPECTED RUNAWAYS

- Check your **teenager's room**. Older children **may pack a few things** if they are running away or might leave a note regarding their disappearance. Be careful not to disturb items in the room such as, desk papers, waste baskets, wallet, purse, linen, makeup and cosmetic bag.
- Check for signs of possible **religious or cult involvement**. This may be evident by looking through the books, magazines, collections, tapes, compact discs, records and personal belongings.
- **Check school locker and desk** for information which may help determine your teenager's plans, friend's names and addresses and possible activities.

Do not wait too long before contacting the police if you suspect your child is missing. Although it is a good idea to go through these first three (3) steps searching for the child, spending too long may be wasting precious police search time.

4. **Have the parent file a missing child report**, if the telephone and land search has not been successful. This report is important as it allows the police to place a description of the child who is missing on the United States Police Information Centre (NCIC) computer system so all police forces in states will know the child is missing.

Depending on your geographical location, the police may wish to notify (County) crossing and ferry-rail-airport facilities.

If they suspect parental or non-stranger abduction, have them provide the police with a **photo of the suspected abductor**, an address, telephone number and any other pertinent information about that person.

5. **See if the parent can provide the police** with the information in a prepared **Identification Kit**. This kit should include updates clear photographs, foot and fingerprints, birth certificate, medical history, passport, dental records, X-rays, child's name and description including location of scars, birthmarks and any other identifiable data (glasses, braces, earrings, etc.). A videotape or a recent home video of the child may be made specifically for the kit. Try to keep a mental note of what your child is wearing each day.
6. **Have the parent's contacts conduct a complete physical search of the area**. Organize a search party of friends and relatives to search areas such as, child's route home from school, community centre, friend's house, favorite hang-out etc. Be on the look out for articles of clothing, toys, books other personal belongings scattered on the ground. If found, do not disturb. Contact a police officer immediately.
7. Leave **someone at home at all times to answer the telephone** in case your child calls.
8. Continue to keep the telephone lines **FREE** at all times.

Recommendations for the Parent(s)

9. **Contact your provincial searching agency and register** the missing child. Searching agencies will provide support and give you suggestions regarding steps that can be taken to assist in the search of your child.
10. **Act quickly.** This is very important. Try to keep focused on the task at hand, which is, locating the missing child. Ask a suitable friend to provide support for you. Each moment that passes is very important and must be used efficiently.
11. **Continue your search** even if there are no immediate results. Follow up for updates on the case by contacting the investigating police officer and the provincial searching agency who registered your child.
12. **Solicit media support** such as radio, television, local publications and newspapers only at the advice of the police and searching agency involved with the case. If you solicit the services of a searching agency, the telephone service provided will screen and evaluate calls. It is not advisable to leave or publicize your home or work number or address. Calls and mail can mislead investigations and can be very upsetting to the searching family.
13. **Distribute a photograph** of the missing child. All police and searching agencies have services available to complete this task. It is important to work cooperatively and keep the agencies searching for your child well informed of your personal searching procedures. If you wish to use other agencies check their credibility thoroughly before providing them with information.
14. **Keep a detailed diary** of people and agencies you have contacted and steps you have already taken. Logging the events lessens the duplication of efforts and allows a review of inquiries.

Exhibit 5