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## [Missing Child Protocol](#)

Note: Do not use this sample policy without customizing it for your institution and, if necessary, having the document reviewed by institutional legal counsel or higher administration to ensure consistency with local, state, and federal laws and institutional policy.

1.0 General. All camp or clinic staff members are required to keep track of all children assigned to their group at all times. Staff members are expected to do the following:

- Frequently count the number of children in their group to make sure that no one is missing.
- Reinforce the camp policy that no child may leave his or her group for any reason without speaking to the counselor.
- Reinforce the practice that other children in the group should tell the counselor if they notice that their assigned buddy or anyone else in the group is not present.
- Adhere to the policy that no child may leave the group alone. If a child must leave the group (e.g., to take a restroom break, to get a piece of equipment), he or she must be accompanied by a staff member or an assigned camp buddy.
- Not become so involved in the activity at hand that the staff member loses track of the participants who are waiting on the sidelines.
- Frequently glance over at children who are waiting on the sideline and tell them to start getting ready to participate.
- Not allow children to be idle for long periods; idle children look for something else to do and wander off without even realizing that they are leaving the group environment.

2.0 Missing Child Protocol. If a child goes missing, the following steps must be followed:

- a. Remain calm to avoid frightening the other children.
- b. Stop the activity and ask the campers about the last time they saw the missing child and if they know where he or she went. If no one knows, pull the group together, have them sit on the ground or floor, tell them that you will be right back to restart the activity, and leave them with your assistant counselor. Never leave the group alone. Call for backup if no assistant is present.
- c. Call the camp director and tell him or her that you are beginning a contained search in the immediate area. Provide the name, basic characteristics of the camper (hair color, age, size, weight), any description you may have that would help others search (such as apparel that he or she was

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wearing), and how long it has been since anyone has seen the child. The camp director will arrive on the scene with other support personnel as soon as possible.

- d. If the group is indoors and an athletic facility monitor or director is on site, alert that person right away. If exits can be monitored, ask the facility monitor or director to help watch those exits with his or her staff to prevent the missing camper from leaving the building.
- e. Search the immediate premises including halls, restrooms, and other activity areas. Call the camper's name as you search.
- f. If the child is not found in the building, go outside and do a sweep around the perimeter of the building. If other adults are around the outside of the building, ask them if they have seen a child fitting the description.
- g. If you find the child, call the camp director immediately so that the search can be called off. If you don't find the child, wait until the camp director arrives for further instructions.
- h. If a camper goes missing from a residence hall, contact every staff member in the residence hall and complete the following:
  1. Assign one or more counselors to go door to door and instruct campers to stay in their rooms until further notified.
  2. Assign one or more counselors to watch the exits and do a perimeter sweep outside the building.
  3. Call the camp director with the information described in point c above and then commence the search through the building.
  4. If you find the child, call the camp director immediately so that the search can be called off. If you do not find the child, wait until the camp director arrives for further instructions.

At any point in this process, if you see a person that looks like he or she doesn't fit in this environment, alert the camp director or any other institutional staff members immediately.

Excerpt from:

Lopiano, D. and Zotos, C. (2013) [Athletic Director's Desk Reference](#). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics. This publication includes over 300 downloadable forms, risk assessment checklists, and policies and planning tools which are designed to be customizable for your institution.

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