

APPENDIX 10

Sample Procedures for a Missing Child

This resource provides sample procedures for staff, volunteers, and ministry leaders to follow if a minor is reported or discovered missing during a ministry program, as outlined in The Foursquare Church Child and Youth Protection Manual. These procedures aim to ensure a swift, organized, and safe response to locate the missing minor while maintaining the safety of other minors and complying with legal and organizational protocols.

Instructions:

1. Follow these procedures immediately upon discovering or being notified that a minor is missing.
2. Document all actions taken using the appropriate incident report form (e.g., Appendix 1: Incident Report for Misconduct or Appendix 2: Accident/Injury Report, depending on the context).
3. Retain all documentation in a secure, confidential location for 7 years.
4. If the situation escalates or requires external reporting, consult Foursquare's legal team at (213) 989-4210 for guidance.

1. Immediate Notification and Initial Assessment

- **Action:** The staff member or volunteer who discovers or is notified that a minor is missing must immediately inform the ministry leader and/or ministry staff.
- **Details to Provide:**
 - Name and age of the missing minor.
 - Last known location and time the minor was seen.
 - Description of the minor's clothing and appearance.
 - Any relevant circumstances (e.g., behavioral issues, recent interactions).
- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Confirm the minor is absent by checking attendance records, headcounts, or check-in/check-out logs (Section 1.3.E).
- **Documentation:** Note the time the absence was reported and who reported it.

2. Secure the Area and Other Minors

- **Action:** Ensure all other minors remain supervised and safe, maintaining required adult-to-minor ratios (Section 1.3.A).
- **Steps:**
 - Assign staff/volunteers to secure the program area, including entry/exit points (Section 1.3.E).
 - Conduct a headcount to confirm no other minors are missing.
 - Restrict access to the program area to prevent additional minors from leaving.
- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Designate appropriate staff members or volunteers to oversee the remaining minors, ensuring no disruption to supervision.

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- **Documentation:** Record the names of staff/volunteers assigned to secure the area and supervise other minors.

3. Organize a Search

- **Action:** Initiate an immediate search of the facility and surrounding areas.
- **Steps:**
 - Assign fully screened adults (Section 1.1) to search specific areas (e.g., restrooms, secluded areas, playgrounds, hallways) as outlined in Section 1.3.E.
 - Check high-risk areas such as restrooms, stairwells, and off-limits rooms (Section 1.3.C).
 - Use zone monitoring techniques (Section 1.3.D) to ensure thorough coverage.
 - Avoid using junior helpers for search tasks (Section 1.3.B).
- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Coordinate the search, assign search teams (minimum two adults per team), and provide a description of the minor.

4. Notify Parents/Guardians

- **Action:** If the minor is not located within reasonable time of initiating the search, notify the parent/guardian.
- **Steps:**
 - Contact the parent/guardian using the contact information provided in the check-in records.
 - Inform them of the situation calmly, providing details of the steps being taken.
 - Request any information about the minor's behavior or likely locations.
- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Ensure that a designated staff member or the ministry leader makes the notification.
- **Documentation:** Record the name of the parent/guardian notified, by whom, and the date/time of notification.

5. Contact Authorities

- **Action:** If the minor is not located within a reasonable time of initiating the search, or if there is reason to suspect foul play or immediate danger, contact local law enforcement.
- **Steps:**
 - Call 911 or the local police department, providing the minor's name, age, description, last known location, and any relevant circumstances.
 - Follow any instructions provided by law enforcement.
 - Consult Foursquare's legal team at (213) 989-4210 for guidance on legal obligations.

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- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Ensure the call is made and coordinate with authorities upon their arrival.
- **Documentation:** Record the date/time of the call, the authority contacted, and any actions taken by law enforcement.

6. Cooperate with Authorities

- **Action:** Provide full cooperation to law enforcement or other authorities investigating the incident.
- **Steps:**
 - Share all relevant documentation (e.g., attendance records, incident reports).
 - Allow access to the facility and staff/volunteers for interviews, as needed.
 - Follow guidance from Foursquare's legal team regarding interactions with authorities.
- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Serve as the primary point of contact for authorities and ensure staff/volunteers comply with requests.
- **Documentation:** Note all interactions with authorities, including names of officers and instructions received.

7. Document the Incident

- **Action:** Complete an incident report using the appropriate form based on the outcome:
 - Appendix 1: Incident Report for Misconduct (if misconduct contributed to the absence).
 - Appendix 2: Accident/Injury Report (if the minor is found injured).
- **Steps:**
 - Include details of the incident, search efforts, notifications, and resolution.
 - Submit the report to the ministry leader immediately.
- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Review the report for completeness and ensure it is stored securely.
- **Documentation:** Specify the form used and date submitted.

8. Notify Foursquare's Legal Counsel and Insurance Team (if applicable)

- **Action:** Contact Foursquare's legal team at (213) 989-4210 if the incident involves authorities, suspected foul play, or legal concerns.
- **Steps:**
 - Report the incident details and any involvement of law enforcement.
 - If the incident involves injury or property damage, notify Foursquare's insurance team.

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- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Ensure notifications are made promptly and documented.
- **Documentation:** Record the date/time, person notified, and conversation details.

9. Follow-Up Actions

- **Action:** Implement measures to prevent recurrence and provide support to affected parties.
- **Steps:**
 - Review and update check-in/check-out procedures, supervision ratios, or facility security (Section 1.3).
 - As needed, provide pastoral care to the minor, family, and staff/volunteers.
 - Conduct a debrief with staff/volunteers to identify lessons learned.
 - Consider additional training on monitoring and supervision (Section 1.4).
- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Develop a plan to address any identified gaps and communicate updates to staff/volunteers.
- **Documentation:** List follow-up actions taken and any policy changes implemented.

10. Secure Documentation

- **Action:** Ensure all incident reports, search logs, and related records are stored in a confidential, secure location.
- **Steps:**
 - Limit access to those with a legitimate need to know.
 - Retain records for 7 years as per the Child and Youth Protection Manual.
- **Ministry Leader's Responsibility:** Verify that all documentation is properly stored and accessible only to authorized personnel.
- **Documentation:** Specify the storage location and confirm secure storage.

Note: *These procedures are designed to complement the policies in The Foursquare Church Child and Youth Protection Manual. Nothing in this resource overrides legal obligations, including mandatory reporting requirements. Staff and volunteers must not investigate suspected abuse or delay reporting to authorities when required. Contact Foursquare's legal team at (213) 989-4210 for additional guidance.*