



Policy and Procedure on Missing Persons

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1.1 Policy Statement

Cope Foundation is committed to a person centred approach to service delivery, and recognises that many people who use our services are able to go about their daily lives very independently while others may need varying levels of support and/or supervision. In accordance with this, each person will be afforded dignity and respect by recognising their individuality, their personal abilities and their support and supervision requirements within the day or residential service and the wider community. The risk of an individual going missing is considered on an individual basis as part of the person's support planning process.

1.2 Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the procedure to be taken if someone is suspected and/or confirmed to be missing or absent without explanation while being supported by Cope Foundation. The policy does not address supervision levels or prevention strategies as these are decided on an individual basis in response to the person's needs and wishes and as part of their individual support plan.

1.3 Policy Scope

This policy applies to all staff employed by Cope Foundation, including those contracted for services, sessional workers, volunteers, visitors, the people who use our supports and their families/carers.

1.4 Core principle underpinning the Policy

1.4.1 The balancing of rights and risk

- Each person's right to independence and freedom of movement both within and outside of the day or residential service and the wider community is respected
- Unnecessary restrictions are not placed on a person's right to freedom of movement.
- Staff are responsible for promoting an active and flexible approach to managing potential dangers in order to minimise restrictions and promote independence
- Staff should support people to be as independent as possible based on their individual support and supervision requirements and personal wishes

- An assessment of risk should be carried out if it is suspected that a person is at risk of going missing (Please see ~~Positive~~ Risk Assessment and Risk Management Planq. Appendix 1).
- Staff should develop strategies to reduce the impact of any identified risk and complete a risk management plan (Please see ~~Positive~~ Risk Assessment . Appendix 1).
- If a person is subject to a restriction based on the level of risk being unacceptable, the reason must be documented, including any assessment used to determine the use of restrictive options
- Staff must act in accordance with Cope Foundation's ~~Policy and Guidelines on the Prevention of or use of Restrictive Interventionsq~~
- Documentation of the restriction must include evidence of all strategies considered and tried in attempting to reduce or manage the risks
- All necessary documentation should be submitted to the Restrictive Interventions Review Committee for approval and on-going review as per the policy

1.5 Definition of a 'Missing Person'

A person is considered **missing** when they are absent from the place where they ought to be and their whereabouts is unknown.

2.0 Procedure

2.1 Confirming if a person is missing

Staff must take the following steps *to confirm* whether the person is missing

2.1.1 A person goes missing from their day or residential service

- Check the person's support plan, area diary or other relevant sources to see if the person is at a prearranged meeting or appointment.
- Ask other people at the day or residential service whether the person has told anyone where they were going.
- If there is no record of this information inform the manager of the day or residential service or their deputy, who then becomes the coordinator of the search
- Inform all persons in the immediate vicinity
- Send a staff member to cover the main exit from the grounds (each area must have a designated ~~main exitq~~)
- A full search of the buildings and grounds should be organised immediately

2.1.2 A person goes missing on an outing

- Search the immediate area
- Seek assistance from bystanders and Gardaí if the person is at risk if on their own
- Notify manager and staff at the day or residential service and/or their parents/guardian/next of kin

2.1.3 A Person does not arrive to their day service

- Contact the person's place of residence to enquire as to their whereabouts
- If no response contact their usual mode of transport to find out if the person was picked up or dropped off

2.1.4 A Person does not return to their residential service at the expected time

- Contact the place where the person was last known to be and make enquiries regarding their whereabouts
- If necessary, contact their usual mode of transport to find out if the person was picked up or dropped off

If the missed person is not found and no explanation is forthcoming then the person is confirmed as 'missing'

NB: The length of time between a person *being missed*' and being *confirmed* as a *missing person*' should be decided on an individual basis. For example if the missed person is known to be at increased risk of harm if unsupervised then they should be confirmed as missing immediately. Staff should seek guidance from their manager with respect to this and if in doubt should always confirm the person as missing sooner rather than later.

2.2 If a person is confirmed as missing

- The Manager or Person in Charge of the day or residential service becomes the Search Coordinator
- The Search Coordinator calls all available staff including those in other areas for inclusion in a search party
- The Search Coordinator coordinates the members of the search party and designates areas to be searched
- An extended search should take place

- The Search Coordinator should stay behind in the day or residential area and remain contactable by phone
- Depending on individual circumstances the search party may require any or all of the following:
 - A fully charged flash light in the case of a person going missing after dark
 - Warm blanket or silver rescue sheet
 - Drinking water
 - First aid kit
- The Search Coordinator should inform the local Gardaí and provide them with a completed missing persons identification form and recent photograph
- The Search Coordinator should inform The Head of Homes and Community division (residential services) or The Head of Learning and Living division (Day services)
- The manager (also the Search Coordinator) of the day or residential service must inform the person's parents/guardian/next of kin.

2.3 Reporting and informing

- The Manager (Search Coordinator) must inform the missing person's family/guardian/next of kin and keep them updated
- The Manager and Line Manager must be informed if a person is confirmed as missing
- Any unexplained absence of a person from a designated residential service is a notifiable event and HIQA must be informed over the phone as soon as possible and by writing within 3 working days. Please use form NFO5D available at: <http://www.hiqa.ie/system/files/NF05D.doc>
- **NB:** Personal details such as name or date of birth that could identify a person should not be submitted to HIQA. Only an individual's unique identifier number can be used
- The staff member responsible for the person at the time they went missing must complete an incident report

2.4 When the person is found

- The Search Coordinator should be informed immediately
- The Search Coordinator must then inform:
 - All members of the search party
 - The person's family/guardian/next of kin
 - The Gardaí, if the person was not found by them
 - Residential or Day service manager/deputy
 - All relevant staff
 - The Manager, Line Manager
 - HIQA . if the missing person is a resident of Cope Foundation
- The person should be medically assessed by the nurse on duty and a medical practitioner if necessary
- If further medical referral or transfer to hospital is indicated this should be arranged and the person's family/guardian/next of kin informed
- An Incident report should be completed
- Debriefing involving all relevant staff, the person and their family if indicated should occur as soon as possible after the event
- A full review of the incident should be conducted in consultation with the person and their family if indicated
- Any contributing factors should be addressed and a risk management plan developed
- If the person is deemed to be at on-going risk of wandering or going missing an individualised response plan should also be developed and placed in the person's support plan
- All persons involved in supporting the person must be familiar with their individualised response plan

2.5 If the person is *known* to wander or abscond

- The person should have an individual response plan included in their support plan
- Check the response plan for steps to follow

Appendix 1

POSITIVE RISK ASSESSMENT (Part A)

Name:	Address:	DOB:
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Identification of Risk	
Describe the risk	
Is the risk potential (it could happen) or actual (it already has happened)?	
Assessment of Risk	
1. Describe the situation/s in which the risk can/does occur?	
2. How likely is it that the risk will arise? Give reasons for your answer <i>NB: If the answer to this is very unlikely or not likely then skip the next 3 questions.</i>	
3. If the risk occurs, who is likely to be injured or hurt?	
4. What kinds of injuries or harm are likely to occur?	
5. What is the worst thing that could happen?	
6. If the risk is not taken what good opportunities, experiences or benefits will the person lose out on?	
7. Is a risk management plan required? <i>If the answer is no then the risk assessment is complete</i>	

Assessment Completed by:	
Signatures:	
1. _____	2. _____
3. _____	
Date:	Review Date: <i>(or earlier if required)</i>

RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (Part B)

Risk Reduction Options			
Strategies	Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
Preventative 1) What could be done before engaging in the activity/situation that poses a risk to prevent or reduce the risk from occurring?			
Active Interventions 2) What could be done during the activity /situation that poses a risk to reduce the risk occurring?			
Reactive measures 3) What could be done if things don't go according to plan and the risk occurs?			
Agreed Risk Management Plan			
Strategies	Preferred Option		Level of Risk
1.To prevent/ reduce risks			
2.Active interventions			
3.What to do if risk occurs (reactive measure)			
Plan Completed by:			
Signatures:			
1)			
2)			
3)			
Date: _____		Review Date: _____ (or earlier if required)	

Adapted from: Neill et al, (2008), Boulter & Pointu, (2006) & DSC Challenging Behaviour Consortium Project Team (2005)