

Queensland Government Protocol for Joint Agency Response

When a Child in Care is Missing

When a child in care is missing from school or home there will be no delays in responding.

The following steps will be immediately taken:

1. If the child is identified as missing from school – the school will notify the caregiver immediately.
 - This notification will be via either manual or electronic means (email or text message)
 - The rollout of electronic methods will be progressively implemented in all state schools throughout 2016.
2. Once contacted by the school (or if the child is missing from home) the caregiver and their care team (e.g., the placement support agency, the Child Safety Services team) will take immediate steps to locate the child.
3. At any point, a report can be made direct to the Queensland Police Service (QPS) by the caregiver or Child Safety Services.
 - This will include completion of a Child Safety Checklist that provides detailed information on the child's particulars and their history.
4. QPS will register the child as missing on their QPRIME system and undertake an immediate risk assessment of the case with Child Safety Services and other relevant parties (e.g., teachers, medical practitioners).
5. QPS will decide whether to issue an amber alert and/or a media release
 - An amber alert and accompanying media release will be issued if the missing child has been abducted, or is considered high risk (any child under 18 years who is missing in concerning or suspicious circumstances and the child may be at imminent risk of death or serious harm)
 - A media release can be issued if the above conditions are not present but where there are concerns for the child's safety or welfare
 - QPS will notify Child Safety Services of their actions.
6. If the child is to be publicly identified as being in out-of-home care:
 - QPS will seek approval from Child Safety Services before there is any public mention of the child being in out-of-home care
 - Child Safety Services and QPS will develop a broader media strategy to manage the flow and release of information about the case, including considering legal restrictions on the release of information.
7. Simultaneous to the amber alert/media release, work will continue by QPS and other agencies on efforts to locate the child.
8. Following the child being safely located, a safety and support plan will be developed by a joint agency care team to address the issues that have led to the child going missing.

