

WK - Absconding and Missing Child policy

Purpose

These guidelines outline practices to follow if a child leaves/wanders the care of the support staff unaccompanied and unsupervised.

Scope

These guidelines will apply to the person with management, nominated team leader, support and others attending the programs and activities of Wonder Kidz services.

Objectives

Wonder Kidz is committed to the following:

- Ensuring a timely and effective response when a child is missing from any Wonder Kidz service.
- Ensuring that support staff act in the child's best interests and take all reasonable steps to ensure the child's safety and well-being.
- Supporting the rights of all children to feel safe and be safe, always.

Roles and responsibilities

The Person with management is responsible for the following:

- Ensuring appropriate procedures are in place to respond to a child missing from the service or care of the support staff.
- Notifying the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of a serious incident at the service, including when a child appears missing.
- Evaluating supervision procedures following a severe incident in consultation with the nominated team leader and support staff.
- Ensuring the guidelines are included in the recruitment and induction processes for all new Support staff.

Support staff are responsible for the following:

- adhering to the Child Youth and Family Supervision Guidelines
- Understanding processes for reporting and managing concerns and incidents and ensuring families know these processes.
- notifying the person with management immediately upon becoming aware of a serious incident at the service, including when a child appears missing or absconding.
- Notifying the team leader of a serious incident involving the child immediately after the occurrence.

Parents are responsible for the following:

- Ensuring support staff are aware of anticipated changes to their child's arrival and/or departure routine.
- Reporting any concerns concerning child supervision to the support staff.

Response plan for a child missing from the service or the care of the support staff while outside the service premises.

1. The support staff who noticed the missing/wandering child:

- A. will contact the police by telephone 000, follow their guidance and request immediate assistance.
- B. Immediately notify the team leader via their mobile phone.
- C. immediately search the surrounding area, indoors and outdoors, and properties.

2. The team leader who was notified of the missing/wandering child:

- a. Contact the parents and inform them that the child is currently missing and that the police have been reached.
- b. Ensure all other children are in a secure, safe space with adequate supervision.
- c. ask questions of adults and children present, where applicable, and ask adults in the vicinity to assist in seeking information about the child's whereabouts.
- d. Follow instructions provided by the police until the child is located.
- e. following the incident, together with the support staff and complete a Serious Incident form.

After the incident, the person with management will:

- Regularly seek feedback from support staff, parents, management, and all affected by the guidelines regarding its effectiveness.
- monitor the guidelines' implementation, compliance, complaints, and incidents.
- Keep current guidelines with legislation, research, policy, and best practice.
- revise the guidelines and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle or as required.

Related service guidelines:

- Acceptance and refusal of authorisations.
- Child Protection
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Supervision of Children
- Excursion, regular outings, service events and transport
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References:

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)

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