

PROCEDURES FOR FINDING A LOST, MISSING, OR RUNAWAY PERSON

Troops, summer camps, resident troop camps, and events should establish a plan for finding a lost, missing, or runaway person. The plan should be tailored specifically to the site and program in operation, be in writing, and be shared with all participants. Troop/group adults and camp/event staff members should have a copy of the plan that is reviewed in advance.

It is important to check after each activity or break in an activity to be sure that all campers are present and accounted for. Buddy checks, roll calls, and counting off are methods that can be used. It is also necessary to have a system for the girls to use to check out when they leave the group with their buddy. An adult should know where they have gone, when they left, and approximately when they should be back.

The plan should include the following elements:

- Instructions for the leader to conduct an immediate search (within the first five minutes) of the unit or program areas they are in and to immediately identify who last saw the missing person, where and how long ago she/he was last seen, and what she/he was wearing.
- Instructions to notify the camp director or other adult in charge if the missing person is not found within the first five minutes and to relay the above information.
- An outline of specific areas of the site to be searched by specific adults/staff members for a specific length of time (five to 10 minutes, depending on the size of the site – it may be appropriate to use a vehicle to facilitate the searching). This outline should also include instructions for contacting other adults/staff members regarding searches in their areas. Every part of the site should be searched, including units, program areas, maintenance areas, dining areas, and any other buildings. If aquatic facilities are a part of the camp, determine if there is a possibility that the missing person has drowned. Activate the waterfront emergency procedures immediately.
- When (how many minutes after notification) the emergency signal alerting everyone to gather at a determined central point will be sounded and what instructions for continuing program activities with the remaining participants will be given. This could free up additional staff members to search while allowing a skeleton staff to supervise the remaining campers in one place.
- When (how many minutes after notification) the professional search and rescue team should be notified. This should not be longer than 20 to 30 minutes after the first report of the missing person. Phone the local sheriff's office to begin this process. Follow the council's emergency procedures as outlined on form #1088.