

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN: TAKING ACTION WHEN CHILDREN GO MISSING

According to the [Huffington Post](#), at least 452 out of 708 total people reported missing since January 2017 were children. While 95% of these children were located, the 37 who have not yet been located are Black or Latinx.ⁱ According to the [Black and Missing Foundation](#), 36.7% of all missing children are Black.ⁱⁱ The number of missing Latinx youth is not easily counted because many of these youth are inappropriately identified as White in data collection. Because Black and Brown children are less likely to be seen as victims, and more likely to be categorized as runaway youth and to be [criminalized for their own abuse](#), we have put together the following tips to ensure that our children are protected. We encourage the community to follow these guidelines and help end this crisis.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD GOES MISSINGⁱⁱⁱ

Contact MPD: Call and File a Missing Persons Report

- Any person **under the age of 16** or **over the age of 65** reported missing to MPD is considered **critical missing**.^{iv} The Patrol Watch Commander can also deem someone **over 16** and under **65** critical missing if there are special circumstances.^v
- When you call MPD, ask them to enter your child's name and identifying information into the **FBI's National Crime Information Center Missing Person File**.
- There is no time limit that you must wait to call the police if your child is missing.
- Gather any recent photos, medical, and dental records.
- **Note:** If your child is under court supervision and absconds, **contact their lawyer**.

If you call MPD and report your child missing, they **must**:

- Follow up within **72 hours** of receiving the initial missing person report, within 7 days of receiving the initial report, within **30 days** of receiving the initial report, and **every 30 days after that until the case is closed**. There are additional requirements if your child is **under 12**.^{vi}
- Report the child to the [National Center on Missing and Exploited Children](#) if the child is in foster care (CFSA).^{vii}

If you call MPD and report your child missing, **MPD can, but is not required to**:

- Issue an **AMBER Alert**. Every jurisdiction has its own Amber Alert plan. MPD is the only entity that can set the DC Amber Alert plan in place. Factors they consider before issuing an AMBER Alert include: whether MPD has ruled out other explanations for the child's disappearance, the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death, whether the child is likely to still be in the area where the information will be broadcast, and whether there is enough information for the public to help the investigation.^{viii}
- Report the child to the **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**.

File a report with [Black and Missing Foundation](#)

Black and Missing Foundation was created to bring awareness to missing people of color, to provide vital resources and tools to missing person's families and friends, and to educate the community on personal safety.

- Visit their website and check out the [Missing Person Checklist](#) to make sure that you have all the information to help law enforcement entities and others locate your child.
- Access their Family Guide and receive [ongoing support](#).

Call the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#): 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) is a national clearinghouse for all data related to missing children. They can quickly create and disseminate posters, and rapidly review, analyze, and disseminate leads to MPD or other investigating agencies, and assist in locating children in other states.

There are a number of reasons why a child might go missing. They could be the victim of **kidnapping** or **human trafficking**, they could have **run away**, or they could be at a friend or family member's home without your knowledge or approval. ALL of these children, *regardless of why they are missing*, deserve to be **safe**. If your child or a youth you know runs away, it is important to **ask why**. They might simply be testing boundaries as adolescents often do, but there also may be something deeper behind their behavior. They might be running **towards safety** or **towards harm**. The chart on the next page describes some of the common reasons why youth run away.

Running From	Running To
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual abuse or gender-based violence • Physical Abuse • Emotional Abuse • Feeling unsafe, unwelcome, or burdensome • Hunger or need for other basic needs • Fights or disagreements with family members • Rejection of identity, especially for lgb/tncg/q youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love, care, and attention • Access to basic needs • Safety • Harm: Unsafe or unhealthy relationships • Traffickers or those willing to exploit them • Money • Access to substances like drugs or alcohol

Domestic Child Sex Trafficking is a form of human trafficking. In D.C., any time a person under the age of 18 engages in sex or a sexual act for **anything of value**, they are a victim of human trafficking.^{ix} There does not need to be an exchange of money to be a victim of human trafficking—if a child engages in sex or a sexual act for food, shelter, or transportation it is still human trafficking, and that child is entitled to services and support.

- You do not need a pimp or trafficker to be considered a victim of human trafficking.
- You do not need to be physically transported to be a victim of human trafficking.
- Children in D.C. cannot be arrested or charged with prostitution, but victims of human trafficking can still find themselves in court for other charges that could be directly related to their trafficking, such as running away, truancy, or substance abuse.^x

IF YOU BELIEVE YOUR CHILD IS IN NEED OF SUPPORT, CONTACT ONE OF THESE PROGRAMS

If you believe a child is at risk for domestic child sex trafficking:

Courtney’s House: founded by survivor and advocate Tina Frundt, Courtney’s house offers survivor-centered crisis response and advocacy to victims of sex trafficking in the District of Columbia. <http://www.courtneyshouse.org/>

For Survivor By Survivor Hotline: 1-888-261-3665; Other referrals 202-525-1426

FAIR Girls: provides counseling, safe housing (ages 18-24), advocacy, and support to female-identifying victims of sex trafficking, ages 11-26. www.fairgirls.org.

Referrals and Crisis number: 1-855-900-3247, jhahn@fairgirls.org, apowell@fairgirls.org

The Exodus Project: <http://www.dcxodusproject.org/about-us.html>

If a child you know is in need of shelter: Sasha Bruce: Sasha Bruce offers a range of services including shelter, workforce development, GED support, and counseling to runaway, homeless, abused, and neglected youth. Emergency line: (202) 547-7777; General: (202) 675-9340. www.sashabruce.org.

Other Important Resources for Youth:

SMYAL (Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders) supports and empowers LGBTQ youth in D.C. For support, call (202) 388-9202. <http://smyal.org/>

Latin American Youth Center: www.layc-dc.org

National Runaway Safeline: Youth and families can call. 1-800-RUNAWAY

ⁱ Craven, Julia. (2017, March 20). Huffington Post. *There’s a Bigger Story Behind the Viral Tweets About Missing Black and Latinx Teens in DC*.

ⁱⁱ Black and Missing Foundation. Accessed March 20, 2017. <http://www.blackandmissinginc.com/cdad/stats.htm>.

ⁱⁱⁱ All information in this document is created for educational purposes and should not be construed to be legal advice or to create an attorney-client relationship with Law4BlackLives-DC.

^{iv} MPD General Order GO-OPS-304.03 (Effective Nov. 1, 2012). https://go.mpdconline.com/GO/GO_304_03.pdf.

^v Id.

^{vi} Id. at 5.

^{vii} Sex Trafficking of Minors Prevention Amendment Act of 2014, 62. D.C. 6647. (May 7, 2015).

^{viii} District of Columbia Amber Alert Plan (2005).

^{ix} Sex Trafficking of Minors Prevention Amendment Act of 2014, 62. D.C. 6647. (May 7, 2015).

^x Id.; Vafa et al. *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girl’s Story* (2015).