

MAXABILITIES OF YORK COUNTY

PROCEDURE TITLE: Consumer Elopement

APPLICABILITY: MaxAbilities of York County Staff

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 1991

PROCEDURE REVISION: May 28, 2026
January 24, 2019
August 26, 2010
February 1, 1999
September 10, 1995

REFERENCE: MaxAbilities Policy: Consumer Elopement
OIDD Department Directive 100-10

PROCEDURE PURPOSE: This procedure establishes the protocol MaxAbilities of York County (MaxAbilities) staff members are to follow in the event of a supported individual's (consumer) elopement.

PREVENTION:

1. Prevention of elopement is part of every MaxAbilities staff member's responsibility. Prevention of elopement happens where there is attention to accountability issues, when there is knowledge of the supported individual and important details of his/her life, when there is diligent observation of the individual, when there is staff sensitivity to their needs, and when there is good communication between staff members.
2. As part of the MaxAbilities Risk Management program, information on each individual known to have a history of actual/ attempted elopement will be maintained in the supported individual's annual day and/or residential plan. Information to be included in the plan:
 - Any known elopement triggers
 - Any known elopement paths/ patterns
 - Date of last known elopement attempt
 - Reference location of elopement prevention strategies
 - Flag in the "Critical Information" section (Plan Page One) that the consumer has a risk of elopement
 - For any consumer who has a first elopement attempt, the above listed information will be added to their plan via Called Team Meeting as part of the Critical Incident review process.

3. As part of the MaxAbilities Risk Management program, all individuals of day and/or residential programs will have a current fact sheet on the THERAP system that contains:
 - A recent full body picture of the individual (no older than two years)
 - Current emergency contact numbers

CONSUMER ELOPEMENT:

1. Elopement is defined as a supported individual assigned to a program and marked present for attendance who cannot be located on the premises or a supported individual who is absent from the site of service delivery beyond the time frames established in their individualized accountability/supervision plan.
2. The first few minutes after a supported individual is known to be unaccounted for are vital in their safe recovery. The longer the individual is missing, the greater the danger to them and the more effort it will take to recover them. In the event of a consumer elopement, all staff members will make the recovery of that individual the highest priority.

SEARCH PHASE: *(see Attachments A-C for checklist of below noted responsibilities)*

1. Immediately upon determination that an individual is unaccounted for, direct care staff (DSP) will:
 - Alert other staff also on duty at the facility to obtain assistance in looking for the individual. If the home is single staffed, staff will need to maintain accountability for other supported individuals in their care while they look until assistance can arrive.
 - Contact the program's supervisor or if they are not able to be reached, contact a member of the MaxAbilities management staff to notify them of the situation and to request assistance. If the situation occurs after business hours- use the MaxAbilities On-Call System to access needed help.
 - Conduct a thorough search of the facility and grounds. Staff will look in every room, in every closet, behind any locked door, in attics or crawlspaces (if accessible), on the vehicle, in any storage buildings and walk the grounds to ensure the consumer is not in an unexpected location before broadening the search. This process should take no longer than **15 minutes**. Once completed, contact the management staff again to give results of the search. If the individual has not been located, LLE (*Local Law Enforcement*) will be notified.
 - Once the facility and grounds have been thoroughly checked, staff will determine who will stay with other supported individuals and the search will be broadened to the streets adjacent to the home.

- Staff members staying in the home will identify an article of clothing worn recently by the consumer to provide to LLE for canine unit use (if applicable). They will also identify any electronic devices owned by the supported individual for LLE use in identification of a possible elopement location.
 - As directed by LLE, staff members leaving the facility as part of a search group will carry a cell phone or other communication device and will check in with the program every thirty minutes to ensure prompt and effective communication is maintained. Part of their communication will be a list of all areas searched during that thirty-minute time period.
 - Continue to search until relieved by another staff member or contacted by a member of management to stop.
 - It is expected that all staff assigned to the program will stay on duty until the consumer is located or they are released from duty by a member of management.
2. Upon notification that a consumer is unaccounted for, management staff will:
- Notify the MaxAbilities CEO /designee to inform of the situation.
 - Immediately following the property/grounds search, contact the supported individual's parent and/or guardian to briefly inform them of the situation. Assure them that they will be updated on the search as information becomes available by administrative staff.
 - If the supported individual is not located within the first **fifteen minutes** (following home and immediate grounds search, contact local law enforcement (city if applicable and/or county) for assistance- unless otherwise directed by the CEO /designee due to specific facts relative to the consumer or situation.
 - Identify the closest neighboring program for staging additional staff search efforts and parking so as not to impede any search efforts or contaminate the scene if search is to be completed by LLE canine unit. Assign one staff member as coordinator of that staging location to provide assistance and instruction to those reporting to assist with search efforts.
 - Contact additional staff to assist in the search efforts. A sufficient number of personnel should be contacted to facilitate rapid location of the supported individual. Staff should be assigned geographic areas to search to prevent duplication of effort.
 - Proceed to the affected program to assist search effort organization and execution as well as to coordinate internal communication.
 - The manager will be the responsible party to communicate by phone with all staff members searching the area. Phone contacts should be at thirty-minute intervals. Based on phone contacts, the manager will keep a list of all searched areas.
 - Print the supported individual's fact sheet, photo, and medication information from the THERAP system. Also gather all pertinent

information about the individual's most recent activity, attire, state of mind so it is ready to be given to law enforcement.

3. Upon notification that an individual is unaccounted for, the CEO or Designee will:
 - Assist the management staff in obtaining needed resources/ staff to conduct a comprehensive search
 - Contact additional management staff to augment search efforts
 - Contact additional administrative staff to augment search coordination efforts both on site at the facility and in the community as needed
 - Liaison with local law enforcement officials to ensure full cooperation by MaxAbilities staff and that maximum effectiveness of joint search efforts are implemented.
 - Contact law enforcement in other towns/ areas to alert them concerning a supported individual whom it is believed may be eloping to a certain location as advised by local law enforcement.
 - Within **one hour**, contact the OIDD Residential Transition Coordinator if the individual has not been located.
 - Notify the MaxAbilities Chairman of the Board
 - Notify the appropriate court if the supported individual who eloped is under court jurisdiction.
 - Notify the local office of DSS (Department of Social Services) if the supported individual is in their custody.
 - Initiate the OIDD Critical Incident Reporting process
 - If the consumer is missing for **24 hours** beyond the initial discovery of elopement, the CEO will consult with local law enforcement officials to determine if media contact is advisable. Local law enforcement will initiate the media contact as they are in charge of the search. The CEO will obtain and distribute needed supported individual information to law enforcement and will notify OIDD's leadership, of pending media contact. If the missing individual is residing in a CRCF, SCDPH will also be contacted at this time to inform of the search.
 - If the consumer is missing for **72 hours** beyond the initial discovery of elopement, the CEO will again consult with local law enforcement to determine if the assistance of "Crime Stoppers" to offer a reward for information leading to the location of the individual is advisable. Contact with "Crime Stoppers" will be initiated by local law enforcement as they are in charge of the search.
 - Document all contacts, actions taken and pertinent facts for entry into official records and the supported individual's electronic record.
 - Oversee the MaxAbilities search efforts for the duration of the search

RECOVERY PHASE:

1. Upon location of the missing individual, direct care staff (DSP) will:

- Keep stressors minimized for both the individual and staff. Approach the individual in a non-confrontational manner, telling them you are glad they are safe.
 - At the time of recovery, complete a brief physical health assessment of the individual. If they need immediate attention for medical distress (as outlined in Standard First Aid training [examples: “no breathing, no pulse, severe bleeding]), EMS contact must be made immediately.
 - Contact the manager as soon as possible to inform that the individual has been located. During this contact, give a brief description of your location and of the individual’s well-being.
 - If the individual is not in need of immediate medical assistance, take them back to the facility and provide them with something to drink.
 - Complete a more thorough physical assessment and document any findings on the THERAP system. If at this point, there is concern about the individual’s physical well- being, a contact can be made to the MaxAbilities Nurse on call for non-emergency direction/assistance.
 - **Note:** In the event the missing individual physically resists returning to the facility, staff should seek the assistance of local law enforcement to have them returned or taken to a safe location. This should be communicated to the Manager who will in turn inform the CEO for additional follow-up.
2. Upon notification that the missing individual has been located, the manager will:
- Contact local law enforcement to inform them that the individual has been found.
 - Contact the family to inform that the individual has been found.
 - Contact the CEO to inform that the individual has been found.
 - Talk with the individual to find out what caused the elopement and to gauge the individual’s current state of mind.
 - Work with staff to determine the appropriate short-term supervision level increase. The manager is responsible to ensure that supervision level changes are effectively communicated to oncoming shifts before leaving the facility.
 - Evaluate the current staffing pattern of the facility to determine if short-term assistance is needed to prevent reoccurrence.
 - Schedule a meeting of the individual’s interdisciplinary team (IDT) for the next business day to further evaluate the situation.
 - Ensure all needed documentation relating to the elopement incident is completed by all pertinent staff.
3. Upon notification that the missing individual has been located, the CEO/ designee will:
- Contact the OIDD Residential Transition Coordinator to inform of the individual’s status.

- Contact the MaxAbilities Board Chairman to inform of the individual's status.
- Notify the Court or DSS as applicable.
- **Note:** If the individual physically resists returning to the facility, the CEO will make the decision to contact OIDD's Judicial Admissions Manager for assistance in obtaining law enforcement pick up orders or in seeking an order of judicial admission as applicable to the individual situation.

ANALYSIS:

1. On the next business day following the elopement, the individual's IDT will meet to review the elopement event and to develop and implement any needed program/ plan changes to try to reduce the probability of future elopement attempts. Things to consider during the meeting include:
 - Any adverse conditions that may have contributed to the elopement
 - Any past elopement attempts
 - Any staffing/ facility issues pertinent to the event
 - Behavior Support Plan/ Behavior Guideline effectiveness (as applicable)
 - The desire of/ appropriateness of the individual residing in another facility
 - The need for long- term supervision changes
 - The need for alert systems (to include door alarms, electronic tracking devices)
 - The need for HRC notifications/ involvement
 - **Note:** Minutes of the meeting are to be developed and maintained for inclusion in necessary reports
2. On the next business day following the elopement, the management team (to include Case Management staff) will review the elopement from a management perspective to determine if any changes/ improvements are needed to agency policy or procedures.

REPORTING:

1. Any elopement event that exceeds one hour must be reported as a Critical Incident per OIDD directive and MaxAbilities policy.
2. Any elopement event that exceeds 24 hours will be reported to SCDPH (*SC Department of Public Health*) by phone for informational purposes only (*Community Residential Care Facilities only*). All elopement events will be reported to SCDPH in writing within 5 days of the event (CRCF facilities only).