

MISSING CHILD POLICY

Purpose

The safety and well-being of every child enrolled at Casa Vera Montessori School is our highest priority.

This policy outlines clear, immediate steps to be taken in the unlikely event that a child goes missing from the centre or during an off-site excursion, as well as the requirements for conducting regular missing child drills to ensure staff preparedness.

The safety and immediate recovery of the child is the centre's highest priority.

This policy applies to all employees, supervisors, supply staff, students, volunteers, and other persons responsible for children at the centre.

Prevention

To minimize the risk of a child going missing, staff must strictly adhere to the supervision and tracking policies:

- Maintaining accurate daily attendance records.
- Conducting regular head counts and/or attendance checks during transitions.
- Confirming that all children are accounted for before leaving a room, playground, vehicle, field-trip location, or other area.
- Maintaining appropriate staff-to-child ratios whenever possible.
- Monitoring entrances, exits, gates, and playground boundaries.
- Keeping exterior doors and gates secured as appropriate.
- Ensuring that staff know which children are in their care at all times.
- Ensuring that children are released only to authorized persons in accordance with the centre's release procedures.
- Providing staff with clear supervision expectations, particularly during transitions.
- Reviewing procedures with new staff, students, and volunteers as part of orientation.

Staff **must immediately** report any concern that a child may be unaccounted for.

Procedures When a Child Is Considered Missing

A child is considered missing when staff cannot immediately account for the child's whereabouts.

The staff member who suspects or realizes that a child is missing must immediately notify the centre supervisor or designate.

The staff member should provide:

- child's name
- child's age/group
- last known location
- approximate time the child was last seen
- description of clothing
- any relevant information about the child's behaviour, needs, or likely destination

Immediate Identification and Alert

- Any staff member who cannot account for a child after a headcount, transition, or routine check must immediately notify the Supervisor and conducts a rapid scan of the immediate area.
- Use a clear, pre-determined signal or verbal alert (e.g., "Code Missing – [Child's first name]") so everyone understands the situation without alarming children unnecessarily.
- The attendance record, sign-in/sign-out sheets, and any recent parent communication are re-verified immediately to confirm a child is genuinely missing rather than signed out or picked up early.
- One staff member (not involved in the search) gathers the remaining children in a safe, supervised area and maintains calm supervision and ratios whenever possible.

Search of Premises

The supervisor/designate will immediately organize a search of the entire childcare premises and assign specific search areas to available staff and maintain communication with staff participating in the search.

Staff will:

- Conduct an immediate search of the child's last known location.
- Check the child's classroom and all nearby areas.
- Check washrooms, storage areas, closets, sleeping areas, and other places where a child could be located.
- Check the playground and surrounding areas.
- Check entrances, exits, gates, parking areas, areas immediately outside the centre and adjacent public walkways.
- Search systematically and communicate findings in real time.

The supervisor/designate will maintain communication with staff participating in the search.

Staff must not leave other children unsupervised in order to search.

Notification of Emergency Services

- call **911** (or the local emergency number if 911 is unavailable)
- provide police/emergency responders with all available information, including:
 - child's full name and age
 - recent photograph, if available
 - physical description
 - clothing worn
 - last known location
 - time the child was last seen
 - direction in which the child may have gone
 - any known medical, developmental, behavioural, or safety considerations relevant to locating the child
 - names/contact information of the child's parents/guardians
 - centre address and access information

The supervisor/designate will follow the instructions of police and emergency responders.

Notification of Parents/Guardians

If the child is not located after a rapid, thorough search of the premises (typically within a few minutes, adjusted for the size of the centre and age of the child):

- A designated staff member who is **not** searching, contacts the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) **immediately** (as soon as the child is confirmed missing) to inform them of the situation and the actions being taken.
- If parents cannot be reached, contact the emergency contacts listed on the child's file.
- Document all attempts to contact (time, method, outcome).

The parent/guardian will be provided with accurate information about:

- when the child was discovered missing
- where the child was last seen
- actions taken by the centre
- whether police/emergency services have been contacted
- where the parent/guardian should report or wait for further information

Staff must not speculate, assign blame, or provide unconfirmed information.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Staff who first notice the child is unaccounted for:**
 - alert Supervisor and all staff
 - begin search of the immediate area
 - ensure remaining children are supervised

- **Supervisor/Designate:**
 - taking command of the response
 - organizing the search
 - ensuring remaining children are supervised
 - calling 911 when required
 - coordinating with police/emergency responders
 - contacting the parent/guardian
 - ensuring required reporting and documentation is completed
 - conducting a post-incident review
- **Other staff/students/volunteers:**
 - assist with search as directed
 - maintain calm supervision of remaining children
 - follow Supervisor instructions
 - providing accurate information
 - documenting information when requested

Staff must not independently leave the centre with children to conduct a search unless specifically directed and it can be done safely while maintaining required supervision.

Missing child off-site (field trips/excursions)

When a child goes missing during an off-site activity, the supervising staff member will immediately notify **the Lead staff in charge** of the group.

Immediate Actions by the Lead Staff:

- alert all staff on the trip
- conduct an immediate headcount of all remaining children and secure them with secondary staff
- designate one staff member to remain at the spot where the child was last seen
- other staff conduct a thorough sweep of the immediate vicinity (nearby shops, restrooms, paths etc.)
- alert event coordinators, security, or management of the facility to initiate a facility lockdown or announcement if applicable
- call 911 if the child is not quickly located and provide police with the child's description and last known location
- follow the instructions of emergency responders.
- contact the daycare supervisor to mobilize support and notify the parents/guardians and the Ministry of Education.

Missing child from a vehicle

Before a vehicle departs, staff must confirm that all children scheduled to travel are present.

Upon arrival, staff must conduct a physical attendance check and confirm that all children have exited the vehicle.

If a child is discovered missing:

- stop the vehicle and secure the area
- immediately conduct a search of the vehicle and surrounding area
- notify the centre supervisor/designate
- call 911 if the child cannot immediately be located
- maintain supervision of all other children
- follow emergency responder instructions

When the Child Is Found

- staff member who finds the child will ensure the child's immediate safety
- supervisor/designate will be informed immediately
- child will be assessed for injury or distress
- emergency medical assistance will be obtained if required
- child will remain appropriately supervised
- parent/guardian and emergency services (if contacted) will be informed
- centre will cooperate with police or other authorities as required
- incident will be documented in accordance with the centre's serious occurrence and incident-reporting procedures
- debrief with involved staff as soon as practicable

After the Incident – Serious Occurrence Reporting and Follow-up

- Supervisor/Licensee (or designate) reports the Serious Occurrence in CCLS within 24 hours.
- if CCLS is unavailable, notify the Program Advisor by telephone or email within 24 hours and complete the CCLS report as soon as possible
- conduct an internal review of the incident, supervision practices, and any contributing factors. Implement corrective actions as needed
- support children and staff who may have experienced distress (debrief, additional resources if required)
- resume normal operations once it is safe to do so
- a written report detailing the timeline, contributing factors, and corrective actions must be compiled and kept on file
- policies and physical layouts/security measures must be updated as necessary to prevent future occurrences

Missing Child Drills

The centre will conduct periodic missing-child drills to ensure staff understand and can implement the procedure effectively.

Drills will be conducted in a manner that does not cause unnecessary fear or distress to children. Children will not be intentionally placed in a situation where they believe they are actually missing.

Conduct a missing-child drill **at least once every three months**.

The supervisor/designate will:

1. Inform participating staff that the exercise is a drill.
2. Adapt drills for different age groups and times of day as appropriate.
3. Begin the drill using a fictional child and designated realistic scenario, e.g:
 - child unaccounted for during a classroom transition
 - child missing from the playground
 - child missing during an off-site activity
4. Record the start time.
5. Have staff demonstrate:
 - immediate notification
 - attendance/head-count procedures
 - assignment of search areas
 - supervision of remaining children
 - exit/gate checks
 - communication with the supervisor
 - emergency-service notification procedure (using a simulated 911 call where appropriate)
 - parent/guardian notification procedure (simulated only)
6. Stop the drill once the simulated child has been located.
7. Record the completion time and observations.
8. Conduct a staff debrief.

No actual emergency call to 911 will be made for a drill.

Drill evaluation

Following each drill, the supervisor/designate will evaluate:

- how quickly the missing child was identified
- how quickly the supervisor was notified
- whether attendance records were accurate
- whether staff knew their assigned responsibilities
- whether remaining children remained appropriately supervised
- whether all relevant areas were searched
- whether exits and gates were checked
- whether communication between staff was effective
- whether staff knew when emergency services should be contacted
- whether the parent/guardian notification procedure was understood
- any delays, confusion, or procedural gaps

Any deficiencies identified during a drill will be addressed through additional training, changes to procedures, or other corrective measures.

Keep a written record of each drill for at least **12 months**.

MISSING CHILD EMERGENCY CHECKLIST

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (First 1–2 minutes)

- **Alert everyone**
- **Secure remaining children**
- **Confirm missing**

SEARCH (Start immediately)

- Search entire premises systematically:
- Staff not needed for children supervision join search.
- Communicate findings in real time.
- Supervisor coordinates search & assigns roles.

NOTIFY (While searching)

- Designated staff (not searching) **calls parent(s)/guardian immediately.**
- If no answer → call emergency contacts on file.
- Document every attempt (time + method).

IF CHILD NOT FOUND QUICKLY

- **Call 911** (or local emergency number).
- Give clear description: age, appearance, clothing, last seen location, any medical/behavioural needs.
- Follow all police/emergency directions. Continue searching only as directed.
- Provide child's file info (contacts, photo if available) to responders.

AFTER CHILD IS FOUND / INCIDENT ENDS

- Notify all staff, parents/contacts, and emergency services (if called).
- Check child for injury/distress and provide care.
- Supervisor documents incident in daily written record.
- Report as **Serious Occurrence (Category 4)** in CCLS within 24 hours (or notify Program Advisor by phone/email if CCLS down).
- Debrief staff; support children/staff as needed.

KEY REMINDERS

COUNT → NOTIFY → PROTECT → SEARCH → 911 → PARENTS → DOCUMENT

DO NOT DELAY CALLING 911 IF THE CHILD CANNOT BE IMMEDIATELY LOCATED.

DO NOT LEAVE OTHER CHILDREN UNSUPERVISED.