

Absent Without Legal Permission

Frequently Asked Questions & Best Practice Tips

Who maintains and oversees the Absent Without Legal Permission (AWOLP) web application?

The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) oversees the AWOLP system. Any questions, concerns, or suggested updates to the system may be directed to Darla Brandon in SCAO Child Welfare Services at brandond@courts.mi.gov or 517-373-8036

How can I access the AWOLP system?

Your local circuit court administrator controls access to the system. SCAO encourages court administrators to provide access to public and private agency caseworkers.

Whom should caseworkers contact with questions about AWOLP children?

Jenelle Ruf is the DHHS designated AWOLP liaison with SCAO. Please direct all system questions to Darla Brandon at SCAO. For non-system questions, please contact Jenelle Ruf at rufj@michigan.gov.

How are children's names entered into the AWOLP system?

Each week, DHHS e-mails SCAO a spreadsheet with the names of children who are AWOLP. SCAO staff enter the information into the AWOLP system. SCAO then sends each local court's designated AWOLP person an updated list of the AWOLP children for that jurisdiction.

How can I arrange to have an AWOLP child listed in the Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN)?

As soon as you know that a child is AWOLP, file a missing person report with your local law enforcement agency. "Suzanne's Law," 42 USC 5779, requires each federal, state, and local law enforcement agency to report each case of a missing person under the age of 21 to the National Crime Information Center at the US Department of Justice. Suzanne's Law also requires entering missing child information into the state (LEIN) and federal systems.

To have their names entered into the LEIN system, children must first be properly categorized as one of the following:

1. **Disability:** A person of any age who is missing and under proven physical/mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting him/herself or others to personal and immediate danger.
2. **Endangered:** A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety may be in danger.
3. **Involuntary:** A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance may not have been voluntary, i.e. abduction or kidnapping.

4. **Catastrophe Victim:** A person of any age who is missing after a catastrophe.
5. **Juvenile:** A person under the age of 18 who is missing and does not meet any of the entry criteria set forth in 1, 2, 3, or 4.
6. **Other:** A missing person over age 17, but under age 21, who does not meet any other category's criteria for LEIN entry (Suzanne's Law).

Most AWOLP youth will be categorized as Endangered, Involuntary, Juvenile, or Other. Once the child's category is properly communicated to a local law enforcement agency, that agency will enter the child's name into the LEIN.

What should I do if my local law enforcement agency refuses to place a child in LEIN?

You may contact Kevin Collins, Manager of LEIN Field Services, Audit and Training Unit, at the Michigan State Police at collinsk@michigan.gov or (517) 241 0461.

After I enter my comments into the comment field in the AWOLP system, why don't they appear there immediately?

After submitting comments, the user must click "Insert" and then "Submit" in order to post and save the comments.

Is a child still considered AWOLP if his location is known, but the new residence has not yet been approved by either the court or DHHS? For example, if a child runs away from a placement in Michigan and is discovered living with his father in Wisconsin, is that child still considered AWOLP?

The facts of each case must be considered individually. Factors to consider include: who the child now lives with, the age of the child, whether the child ran to and now lives with someone against whom an abuse/neglect petition was filed. For example, if an 18-year-old youth ran to his grandmother's house across the border in Indiana and DHHS had been in the process of seeking placement with the grandmother, it may make sense to remove the child from the AWOLP list.

What are some of the most useful reports in the AWOLP system?

- AWOLP Incident Report for Child: Allows a caseworker to print an AWOLP report for an individual child and present that report at an AWOLP court hearing.
 - AWOLP LEIN Expiration 30 or 60 days (by county): Identifies incidents with LEIN listings that will expire within the next 30 or 60 days, allowing courts and caseworkers to ensure that the LEIN listing does not lapse inadvertently.
 - AWOLP History for Child: Provides a history of AWOLP events for a particular child, including AWOLP date(s), located/terminated date(s), number of days missing for each incident, and the placement from which the child ran for each incident.
- Missing AWOLP Information (by county): Allows local system users to identify what additional information the AWOLP system needs for a particular child. The missing data can be added to create a more accurate and up-to-date report.

- Current AWOLP Incidents (by child or by county, with comments): Provides information about all children currently AWOLP in a particular county, including current age, date missing, number of days missing in this incident, and comments (with date and staff identification).

If a caseworker updates MISACWIS to note that a child is no longer AWOLP, must the caseworker also update the AWOLP system?

Yes! The MISACWIS and AWOLP systems are separate. They are not linked and do not directly share information. Therefore, in order for each system to properly report the status of each AWOLP child, each system must be updated separately.

Each local court should develop a plan that specifies who will update the AWOLP system when a child is located or court jurisdiction is terminated. The plan could require court staff or caseworkers to manually close a case in the AWOLP system. This ensures that both MISACWIS and the AWOLP system accurately report a child's AWOLP status.

In the system's "AWOLP Status" tab, the person updating the AWOLP system by removing a child's name must note whether the child: (a) was located, or (b) is still absent but no longer classified as AWOLP. Regardless of which corresponding box a staff person checks, any pertinent case details should also be noted. Those details will vary from case to case.

Why should courts provide AWOLP system access to DHHS and private agency caseworkers?

Court personnel and caseworkers all benefit by sharing information on AWOLP children.

The court and its staff do not have the detailed search information because it is the caseworkers who conduct the searches. When caseworkers have access to the AWOLP computer system, they can quickly and conveniently update the search information by cutting and pasting information from MISACWIS into the AWOLP system. In addition, for AWOLP court hearings, the caseworkers can use the AWOLP system to print reports that detail their search efforts. The court then will have a ready-made report that is easy to read, while the caseworker does not have to create a separate report for the AWOLP hearing. If courts and caseworkers can agree on a standard reporting format to use in the AWOLP system, everyone who oversees the child's case can conveniently share the most current and detailed information.

What resources exist to help locate and return a child who runs to another state or country?

<http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/services/CWS/AWOLP/mexico.pdf>