All camps/conferences for children (age 18 or under) hosted on the University of Kansas Lawrence campus are advised to have a written lost camper plan, and all camp/conference staff should be trained in the procedures included in the plan. This sample plan is very general. Camp directors are encouraged to make modifications to ensure the plan is appropriate for their camp. Modifications might include references to specific facilities, use of available communication systems, emergency response numbers, etc. For a Microsoft Word copy of this same plan, click here.

During a lost camper search, one person (the search director) must be in charge of the entire search to avoid confusion and wasted time. This should be a senior and experienced member of the camp staff, and all members of the camp staff should have the name and phone number of the search director.

If a camper does not attend a class or scheduled activity, or is missing at bed check, the main camp office and the search director are to be notified immediately. To the extent possible, the following information should be included in the initial report:

- Camper’s name and age
- What the camper was wearing
- Last place the camper was seen
- Other potentially helpful information, e.g., indications that the camper is homesick or has had conflicts with other campers or camp staff

Within the first 10 minutes after the missing camper report is received, the search director

- Calls the camper’s cell phone, if available
- Assigns a staff member to check the camper’s room, if the camp is residential
- Informs senior camp administrators
- Informs all staff members, preferably by a prearranged signal or text message, that a camper is missing
- If a communication system is available, asks the camper to report to a specified location
- Assigns staff to search restrooms, showers, locker rooms, cafeterias, snack bars, and other areas
- Checks office records to determine whether the camper was picked up by parents or made other special arrangements

If the camper is not located within 10 minutes and there is no record of parental pick-up or other arrangements, the Search Director

- Contacts the KU Public Safety Office (KUPSO) (785 864-5900)
- Contacts KU News and Media Relations (785 864-8858 or 785 864-7100) to provide all relevant information about the search, including the name of the KU office with which the camp is working most closely, e.g., Student Housing, Continuing Education, etc. KU News will contact that University office and other University officials as appropriate and, with PSO, will be the principal University contact for information related to the search.
- Contacts the parents or other responsible party to notify them of the situation and to determine whether they have picked up the camper or have had recent contact
- Assigns a staff member to call the camper’s cell phone every 10 minutes
- Assigns staff members to speak with friends or roommates of the missing camper
- Receives updates from staff members who have searched specified areas and makes additional search assignments as needed
- Maintains regular contact with parents to update them of any developments

When the camper has been located, the search director
- Informs the parents
- Informs KUPSO
- Informs all camp staff
- Informs KU News

With appropriate staff, assesses the camper’s needs or behavior and responds accordingly. Every situation is unique, and if the camper has been traumatized by the situation, special attention may be required.

If it is determined that the camper chose not to follow camp protocols/procedures, it is the camp director’s responsibility to determine whether disciplinary action or monitoring of participation/behavior is advisable, to determine whether the camper’s parents should retrieve their child, and to inform the camper and appropriate staff.