



March 28, 2017

Dear DCPS Families, Students, and Staff,

In recent weeks, many national news outlets and social media have inaccurately reported on a spike in missing teens in DC – despite the fact that the number of missing persons in the District has declined, and there is no evidence to suggest human trafficking or other issues. Ensuring our students are safe is a priority for DC Public Schools. I'm writing to share what our city is doing to address missing children and remind you of school protocols to keep students safe.

The perception of a surge is largely attributable to a change in the Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD) reporting policy, which increases the use of social media to raise awareness about every child who goes missing in an effort to generate more tips. Washington, DC is not unlike many other cities experiencing the same issue, but what sets us apart is the immediacy we place on spreading information about our missing young people and the priority we place on missing youth of color in particular – this should be a national model.

On Friday, March 24, Mayor Bowser shared six steps to protect our youth, a first-of-its-kind initiative to locate young people who have been reported missing, provide critical resources to better address the issues that cause young people to leave home, and support young people who may be considering leaving home. The six steps include:

1. Increase the number of Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers assigned to the Children and Family Services Division;
2. Expand MPD's Missing Persons webpage and social media to include case catalogs with more information;
3. Establish the Missing Persons Evaluation and Reconnection Resources (MPERR), an innovative approach to bridging MPD's efforts to locate missing children with social services support for at-risk youth;
4. Create a new working group to analyze individual cases led by the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG);
5. Provide additional grant support for nonprofits that are currently working with the District to enhance the safety net for youth who leave home; and
6. Promote a #talkdontrun effort to support public education addressing missing youth in the District.

You can read more about these initiatives here: <http://mayor.dc.gov/release/bowser-administration-announces-six-new-initiatives-address-missing-young-people-washington>. We also want our students, their parents and guardians, and our team to know that resources are available at [www.1800runaway.org](http://www.1800runaway.org).

Safety is our top priority at DCPS, which is why we ensure that students leave school grounds with parents, guardians, or another approved adult at pick-up every day unless another individual arrangement has been made with the school. For older students who are allowed to walk to school, remember to walk with friends and find a safe route to school. For more tips on safe passage, please go here: [http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/sites/default/files/tips\\_for\\_kids.pdf](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/sites/default/files/tips_for_kids.pdf). If you have questions about this process, please speak with your teacher or principal.

Additionally, we want all students to feel supported and have health resources if they are considering running away or leaving home. If you have questions or want to talk to someone, please reach out to your Counseling Department. They will have additional resources and will also have office hours in an effort to support the school community.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AW', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Antwan Wilson  
Chancellor, DC Public Schools