




STARK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

GENERAL ORDER

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66000.00 Purpose

- .01 The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and responsibilities regarding this office's response to reports of missing persons and children.

66001.00 Policy

- .01 It shall be the policy of the Stark County Sheriff's Office to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing persons. Jurisdictional conflicts are to be avoided when a person is reported missing. If a missing person either resides in, or was last seen in this jurisdiction, this office will immediately initiate the required reporting process. If a missing person legally resides in this jurisdiction and was last seen in another jurisdiction, but the law-enforcement agency covering that jurisdiction chooses not to take a missing-person report, this office will assume reporting and investigative responsibility.
- .02 Questions concerning parental custody occasionally arise in relation to missing-child reports. It shall be the policy of this agency to accept the report of a missing child even if custody has not been formally established. Reporting parties shall be encouraged to obtain legal custody as soon as possible; however, since the safety of the missing child(ren) is paramount, members of this office will open a case when it can be shown that the child is missing, without explanation, from his or her usual place of residence.

NOTE: There is no required waiting period for reporting a missing person. A person may be declared "missing" when his or her whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable persons as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject's behavior patterns, plans, or routines.

66002.00 Definitions

- .01 The term **Investigator** refers to personnel regardless their rank, position or assignment designated to conduct the investigation of a missing person.
- .02 The term **missing adult** refers to a person who is:
 - A. 18 years of age or older and
 - B. Whose absence is contrary to his or her normal patterns of behavior and may be due to one or more of the unusual circumstances listed in Paragraph .04 of this section.
- .03 The term **missing child** refers to a person who is:
 - A. Younger than 18 years of age and
 - B. Whose whereabouts are unknown to his or her parent, guardian, or responsible party.

.04 A missing adult or child will be considered "**at-risk**" when one or more of the **unusual circumstances** noted in paragraph .05 are present.

.05 The term **unusual circumstances** refers to;

- A. A missing child 13 years of age or younger. *This age was established by the federal Missing Children Assistance Act because children of this age group have not established independence from parental control and do not have the survival skills necessary to protect themselves from exploitation on the streets.*
- B. A child or an adult who is missing and believed to be one or more of the items noted below:
 1. Out of the zone of safety for his or her age and physical and mental condition. *The zone of safety will vary depending on age. In the case of an infant, for example, the zone of safety will include the immediate presence of an adult custodian or the crib, stroller, or carriage in which the infant was placed. For a school-aged child the zone of safety might be the immediate neighborhood or route taken between home and school. In the case of an elderly person of diminished physical and/or mental health, the zone of safety might include the close proximity and availability of a caregiver familiar with that individual's condition and needs.*
 2. Mentally diminished. *If the person is developmentally disabled or emotionally disturbed, or the victim of disease, he or she may have difficulty communicating with others about needs, identity, or address. The disability places the person in danger of exploitation or other harm.*
 3. Drug dependent. *In the case of a child, the term "drug dependent" shall refer to dependence on either prescription or illicit substances, since any drug dependency puts a child at substantially increased risk. In the case of an adult, the term "drug dependent" shall refer to a dependence on legally prescribed medicines vital to the adult's continued physical well-being. This in no way limits an officer's discretion in determining exigent circumstances regarding an adult's use of illicit drugs.*
 4. A potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation. *Significant risk to the person can be assumed if investigation indicates a possible abduction, violence at the scene of an abduction, or signs of sexual abuse.*

5. In a life-threatening situation. *The environment in which the person is missing may be particularly hazardous. Examples of a dangerous environment could be a busy highway for a toddler, an all-night truck stop for a teenager, or an outdoor environment in inclement weather for a child of any age or elderly missing person.*
6. Absent from home for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing. *While some persons may incorrectly assume that 24 hours must pass before law enforcement will accept a missing-person case, a delay in reporting might also indicate the existence of neglect or abuse within the family.*
7. Believed to be with persons who could endanger his or her welfare. *A missing person in such circumstances is in danger not only of sexual exploitation, but of involvement in criminal activity such as burglary, shoplifting, and robbery.*
8. Is absent under circumstances inconsistent with established patterns of behavior. *Most children and adults to some degree have established routines that are reasonably predictable. Significant, unexplained deviations from those routines increase the probability that the person may be at risk. A child or adult whose disappearance involves circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that the missing person should be considered at risk.*

.06 Actions upon determination of **unusual circumstances**.

- A. If it is determined that **unusual circumstances** are involved in the report of a missing adult or child, the person will be considered **at-risk**, and an expanded investigation, including the use of all appropriate resources, will immediately commence. *While all missing-person incidents should be thoroughly investigated, those involving unusual circumstances indicate a heightened likelihood of risk to the person and, therefore, require an intensive response.*
- B. If appropriate, existing interagency response protocols — including the **AMBER Alert** for children and the **Ohio's Missing Adult Alert** system and/or other immediate community notification methods, if available — should be activated. *Pre-planned strategies for responding to missing-person reports are essential for successful case resolution. By identifying all the services and resources a region has available to search for missing persons, multiagency agreements can be reached beforehand and promptly activated when the need arises. See Paragraph "G" in Section 66003.01 regarding the role of the call-taker, Paragraph "L" of Section 66003.02 regarding the role of the first responder, and Paragraph "C" of*

*Section 66003.03 regarding the role of the supervisor for additional
AMBER Alert commentary.*

66003.00 Procedure

- .01 **Communications personnel** receiving the report of a missing person shall:
- A. Determine if circumstances of the call meet the definition of a missing child or adult as set forth in Section 66002.00. *By questioning the caller about the circumstances of the report, the call-taker can make a preliminary assessment about the level of risk to the missing person. This assessment shall also prepare the call-taker to promptly activate additional response protocols if needed.*
 - B. Dispatch a deputy to the scene of the call promptly. *The handling of missing-person reports over the telephone is discouraged since accurate assessments of risk to the person cannot be made. **Notes: (1) The National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990 mandates law enforcement's immediate response to reports of missing children and the prompt entry of descriptive information into the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File. (2) The PROTECT Act of 2003 amended the National Child Search Assistance Act to extend the same NCIC reporting responsibility and other benefits to young adults, 18, 19, and 20 years of age.***
 - C. Notify a supervisor when appropriate. *Because of the complexity of some missing-person cases, especially those that may require the immediate mobilization of investigative resources, call-takers should verify that a supervisor has been notified whenever officers respond to such an assignment. A supervisor should be notified of every reported incident in which "unusual circumstances" are determined to exist.*
 - D. Transmit the appropriate radio alerts and other notifications. *A critical responsibility of the call-taker is to obtain sufficient information from the reporting party to broadcast a radio message that alerts other officers about the circumstances of the person's disappearance. Information should include the person's height, weight, hair and eye color, and clothing, as well as the location where last seen. The radio alert should contain any information known about a possible abductor with special emphasis on the description of the suspect and vehicle used as well as direction of travel.*
 - E. Search agency records for related information. *It is essential for responding deputies to know if the person or family has been the subject*

of previous reports that might have a bearing on this incident. If possible, records should also be reviewed to learn if any incidents have been reported in proximate time or location to this incident that might have investigative value in this case. Complaints such as attempted abductions, prowlers, public lewdness, and suspicious persons will be of particular interest. Access should also be made to the Sex Offender Registration list to determine if individuals designated as sexual predators reside, work, or might otherwise be associated with the area.

- F. Safeguard all pertinent records. *The dispatcher should also ensure that records of all communication related to this incident, such as telephone conversations with the reporting party including written notes regarding the discussion, radio broadcasts, and all subsequent notifications, are safeguarded for future investigative reference.*

- G. Initiate media contact — including activation of the **AMBER Alert or Ohio's Missing Adult Alert** system and/or other immediate community-notification methods when authority has been given by either the Sheriff or the Chief Deputy of operations. *The dispatcher, under direction of a law-enforcement supervisor, may be best situated to provide information to the media that is designed to elicit public assistance in the search for a missing child. Additionally the dispatcher should also be prepared to immediately activate the appropriate immediate, community-notification method if so directed by appropriate law-enforcement personnel.*
 - 1. Priority of Activation:
 - a. Enter the information into NCIC following the correct LEADS protocol with a Code of AA. Entering the information into NCIC will result in the following:
 - 1). OSHP, Ohio Attorney General's Office, FBI, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) will be notified. (All agencies will contact initiating agency)
 - 2). OSHP and The Attorney General's Office will contact the activating agency offering assistance. The initiating agency will need a dedicated phone number that the OSHP can provide to the public and media.
 - 3). The initiating agency will need to have a representative present to answer any questions regarding the abduction. The Sheriff or his designee will designate this person.
 - 4). OSHP will do a statewide radio broadcast, a statewide TTY, enter data into the Attorney Generals Amber Alert website

page, contact Amber Ohio activation, and notify ODOT for sign activation. They can also contact NLETS for out of state alerts.

- b. Immediately activate the EAS system following the enclosed guidelines for EAS Amber Alert activation.
2. Priority of Deactivation:
 - a. Deactivate all systems in the same order in which they were activated.
 - b. The Sheriff, Chief Deputy, or the Commander of Operations will issue the order to deactivate the Amber Alert.
3. If the Information Does Not Meet the Amber Alert or Missing Adult Criteria, The Sheriff or Designee Can Still:
 - Work with the media to get the word out.
 - Follow good, sound investigative strategies, as we did before AMBER.
 - Enter the missing juvenile through LEADS and NCIC.
 - Send a Countywide Teletype
 - Do a Law Enforcement Radio Broadcast
 - Contact Ohio Missing Children Clearing House (1-800-325-5604)
 - Contact A Child is Missing (1-888-875-5604)
 - Contact OSHP for assistance (1-614-466-2660)
 - Statewide EAS alert
 - Statewide Radio Broadcast
 - Statewide Teletype
 - Contact Attorney Generals Representative
 - NLETS & NCIC Screen
 - Updates & Cancellations

- The initiating agency will need to have a representative present to answer any questions regarding the abduction.

4. To Send an "Amber Alert" EAS Message:

- a. Prepare your message, write it down. In an Amber Alert use the following guidelines:

- 1). Name, age, and physical description of the child.
- 2). Description of the child's clothing.
- 3). Location and time that the child was last seen
- 4). Description of the vehicle involved in the abduction.
- 5). Description of possible suspects.
- 6). Last known direction of travel and possible destination.
- 7). The Investigating law-enforcement agency and telephone number the public should call if they have information about the case.

Note: This phone number may not be the Stark County Sheriff's Office phone number; the number may be another Law-enforcement agency that has requested our assistance in issuing an Amber Alert.

Sample Transmission: "THIS IS THE STARK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE WITH AN AMBER ALERT EMERGENCY MESSAGE."

Sample Message:

Mary Ann Doe was abducted from her home at 2100 First St. NE Canton, Ohio between 08:00 and 09:00 on April 26th 2006. Mary Ann Doe is 6 years of age 3'10"/40 lbs blond curly hair/brown eyes w/a birth mark on her right arm. Mary is wearing a orange stocking cap, blue jacket, red pants and white tennis shoes. Mary was last seen with a neighbor John Smith 45 years old approximately 6'2"/210 lbs brown hair/brown eyes. John Smith was seen driving a 2001 Brown Honda Accord 2D with a dented right front fender w/ ohio license plate number BR549. John Smith was traveling south in the 1800 Block of Cleveland Avenue South. John Smith is our only suspect. Please contact the Stark County Sheriff's Office at (330) 430-3684 if the vehicle or John Smith is sited. John Smith is a known Sex Offender and is considered dangerous. The child may be in grave danger!

"THIS IS THE STARK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE"

- b. Use the EAS Remote Control with the labeled buttons on it. PICK UP THE MICROPHONE WITH THE COILED CORD. PRESS THE BUTTON ON THE REMOTE CONTROL THAT IS MARKED RECORD, PRESS THE MICROPHONE SWITCH AND IN A CLEAR, LOUD (BUT DON'T YELL) VOICE SAY:
 - 1). "THIS IS THE STARK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE WITH AN AMBER ALERT EMERGENCY MESSAGE."
 - 2). (YOUR MESSAGE MUST BE LESS THAN 90 SECONDS LONG). READ THE PREPARED MESSAGE AND CONCLUDE WITH:
 - 3). "THIS IS THE STARK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE".
- c. Your REAL message is now in the Emergency Alert system (EAS) equipment in front of you. Check your message before you send it by pressing the CUE button on the remote control. Your message will be played back to you but not sent out.
- d. NEXT . . . Press the Appropriate Emergency Button on the Remote. In this case because it is an Amber Alert you should press CAE.
- e. NEXT . . . Adjust the duration time to ONE (1) HOUR using the key on the button on the remote unit marked "UP". Watch the screen on either the remote unit or the SAGE/ENDEC screen.
- f. NEXT . . . Press the "ENTER" button on the remote unit.
- g. NEXT . . . Call WHBC at (330) 456-7198 and tell them you are sending them a REAL Emergency Alert System Message.
- h. NEXT . . . Use the single line telephone on top of the dispatch console and call 9 (330) 580-2439. When the equipment answers the phone and you hear a beep tone you are connected to WHBC's EAS equipment.
- i. Lay down the phone, PRESS THE RED BUTTON ON THE TELEPHONE COUPLER, AND THEN PRESS THE "ENTER" BUTTON ON THE REMOTE UNIT.
- j. At the end of the message disengage the RED BUTTON and hang up the phone. When WHBC relays the message to the other stations you will hear it on your receiver and it will print out as received as well.

MISSING PERSON INFORMATION SHEET

When reporting a missing person to A Child is Missing, (888) 875-2246 or Emergency Back-Up Pager (954) 492-4778; you will need to provide the following information:

- Name of missing person:
- DOB of missing person:
- Gender
- Nationality
- Height
- Weight
- Eye color
- Hair color
- Any other characteristics such as glasses, tattoos, piercing, scars etc.
- Clothing description
- Location last seen with zip code
- Provide accurate spelling of street names
- Provide nearest major intersection
- Residence if different than last seen location
- Date and time last seen
- Is the person habitual runaway? First time missing?
- Were friends/family notified?
- Is there water or wooded areas near the location last seen?
- Did the missing person leave in a vehicle, on bicycle or skateboard?
- If in a vehicle, what is the vehicle description and license plate?
- Is there any foul play suspected? Parental/Stranger Abduction?
- Was there a confrontation prior to the person's disappearance?
- Does the person have a substance abuse problem?
- Is the person taking medication?
- Name of the Law Enforcement agency SO/PD
- State
- County
- Case # assigned to case
- Agency telephone number for the public to all of them have information
- Name of officer in charge of case
- Contact number of officer in charge of case. Cell, beeper, or land line.

- .02 The **initial deputy** or first responder assigned to the report of a missing person shall:
- A. Respond promptly to the scene of the call. *Even if the assigned deputy has been provided with initial information such as the missing person's description and other facts about the incident, it would be inappropriate to delay response to conduct a random search or stop suspicious individuals. Unless in immediate response to the missing person's safety, these activities can be handled by other patrol units.*
 - B. Interview the person(s) who made the initial call. *The purpose of this interview is to gain insight into the circumstances surrounding the disappearance and other information needed to conduct an initial assessment of the case.*
 - C. Obtain a description of the missing person and start a Missing Person Supplement. *The collection of information about the missing person, including race, height, weight, hair and eye color, clothing, and other noteworthy features, should be done promptly and relayed to other officers who may be assisting in the investigation. Recent photographs and/or videotape should be secured if available.*
 - D. Verify that the person is in fact missing. **Note:** *A search of the home should be conducted even if the missing person was last seen elsewhere. If appropriate, deputies should obtain written permission to search houses, apartments, outbuildings, vehicles, and other property that might hold information about the person's disappearance.*
 - E. Confirm custody status. *First responders should ascertain whether a dispute over the child's custody might have played a role in the disappearance. Questions regarding whether the reporting party has full legal custody, if the noncustodial parent has been contesting custody, or if the missing child expressed a wish to live with the other parent, may help an deputy gain important insight into the case.*
 - F. Identify the circumstances of the disappearance. *First responders need to ascertain whether the circumstances surrounding a person's disappearance are such that a heightened level of response is warranted. If "unusual circumstances" exist, as defined in Paragraph .04 of Section 66002.00, then the decision to employ additional response methods is clear. In other situations where the circumstances are not clear, officers should keep the missing person's safety in mind and act accordingly.*
 - G. Determine when, where, and by whom the missing person was last seen. *This information is needed to determine factors such as abduction time*

frame, window of opportunity, and verification of previously received information.

- H. Interview the individual(s) who last had contact with the missing person. *Effective questioning of those individuals who last saw or spoke with a missing person is crucial in the case-assessment process. While seeking information about the person's appearance, demeanor, and actions, officers should also be alert to contradictions or evasiveness by the witness, especially if these statements cannot be readily substantiated.*
- I. Identify the missing person's zone of safety for his or her age and physical and mental state. *Responding deputy(s) should attempt to determine how far the missing person could travel from the location where last seen before he or she would most likely be at risk of injury or exploitation. This perimeter should, under many circumstances, define the first search zone.*
- J. Make an initial determination of the type of incident. *By employing all available assessment tools (i.e., completion of standardized forms; interviews with parents, other family members, and friends; statements of witnesses; and search of scene) an officer should be able to reach a preliminary determination regarding the type of case and need for additional resources. Note: Deputies must be cautious in "labeling" or classifying a missing-person case, since the classification process shall affect the way in which initial information or evidence is gathered. Even if first indications suggest a "less urgent" incident, deputies should consider all possibilities until the case category is clearly determined.*
- K. Obtain a description of the suspected abductor(s) and other pertinent information. *Deputies need to immediately record witness information, not only for general investigative use but also before witnesses forget or speak to others who may confuse or make suggestions about what was actually observed. If the abduction scene involves a business or other public place, deputies may be able to supplement witness information with video from security cameras that might provide crucial information about the suspect, vehicles, and circumstances. In the case of a suspected family abduction, the reporting party may have photographs of the abductor or other valuable information.*
- L. Evaluate whether circumstances of the child's disappearance meet existing AMBER Alert and/or other immediate community notification protocols. Discuss plan activation with supervisor. *In most cases the decision to activate an AMBER Alert rests with supervisory staff; however, input from first responders may be instrumental in the supervisor's decision-making process.*

M. Determine the correct NCIC Missing Person File category and ensure that a notification is promptly transmitted. *There are 6 categories within the Missing Person File. They are:*

1. *Disability;*
2. *Endangered;*
3. *Involuntary;*
4. *Juvenile;*
5. *Catastrophe; and*
6. *Other.*

Quickly entering this information into NCIC will increase the possibility of identifying a missing person coincidentally stopped or observed by law-enforcement personnel not yet aware of the incident at hand. This should be done within 2 hours of receiving the call or sooner. In the case of a missing child, simply because the child is younger than 18 does not require that the juvenile category must be used. The circumstances of the disappearance should govern category selection.

N. Provide detailed descriptive information to the communications unit for broadcast updates. *As information becomes available regarding the missing person's physical appearance, circumstances of the case, or description of the potential abductor, the initial deputy should ensure that other deputies and agencies are provided with up-to-date facts.*

O. Identify and interview everyone at the scene. *The name, address, home and work telephone numbers of everyone present at the scene, along with his or her relationship to the missing person, should be recorded. If possible, include them in photographs and/or videotapes of the incident scene. By interviewing each person privately, deputies may be able to uncover information that shall be instrumental in resolution of the case.*

P. Conduct a thorough search of the scene. *If appropriate, deputies should obtain written permission to search houses, apartments, outbuildings, vehicles, and other property that might hold information about the person's disappearance. With the assistance of additional personnel, a systematic, thorough search of the incident scene should be conducted. In the case of children, first responders should never assume that searches conducted by distraught parents or others have been performed in a thorough manner. Another check of the house and grounds should be made that includes places where children could be trapped, asleep, or*

hiding. Special attention should be paid to enclosures like refrigerators, freezers, and the interior of parked vehicles where limited breathing air may place the child at even greater risk. In the case of older children, first responders should ask if parents have checked with the child's friends or perhaps overlooked or forgotten something the child may have said that would explain the absence. Deputies are again reminded to conduct a thorough, immediate search of the person's home and property — even if the disappearance supposedly took place elsewhere. When possible deputies should also search a missing child's school locker as well as any computer or electronic messaging systems to which a child has access. Searchers should also be alert for any surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity that may have captured information about the person's disappearance.

- Q. *Secure and safeguard the area as a potential crime scene. If unusual circumstances exist, first responders must take control of the immediate area where the incident occurred and establish an appropriate perimeter to avoid destruction of vital evidence. In addition to external crime scenes, the missing person's home, and particularly his or her bedroom, should be secured and protected until evidence and identification material such as hair, fingerprints, and bite marks are collected.*
- R. *Complete necessary reports and appropriate forms. Information gathered by the first responding deputy(s) may be instrumental in the eventual case resolution. To record this important information, deputies should prepare a chronological account of their involvement and actions in the case from time of assignment to the point of dismissal. Reports should include everything, not just those events that seem to have a direct bearing on the case.*

.03 The **supervisor** assigned to the report of a missing person shall:

- A. *Obtain a briefing from the first responder(s) and other office personnel at the scene. This briefing allows the supervisor to determine the scope and complexity of the case and develop an appropriate response. The briefing should be conducted away from family, friends, or any other individuals who may be present. Doing so shall allow deputies to speak freely about the events that have transpired and pass along initial impressions and opinions that might be misconstrued by others.*
- B. *Determine if additional personnel and resources are needed to assist in the investigation. Depending on the situation, a supervisor may determine that additional personnel, including specialized units, should be called to the scene or otherwise assist in the investigation. Certain cases may also require that the supervisor activate existing interagency*

response protocols. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate investigative unit has been notified and is responding to the correct location.

- C. Consider activation of the **AMBER Alert or Ohio's Missing Adult Alert** system and/or other immediate community notification methods. *If circumstances indicate the chances for the child's safe recovery would be increased by immediate public awareness, a supervisor should promptly implement such efforts.*
1. These alerts will be approved by the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, of the Commander of Operations. Do not proceed without their orders. This includes outlying agencies also.
 2. **Ohio's AMBER Alert:** *(All of the below listed criteria must be met before an alert can be issued O.R.C. 5501.52 (B))*
 - a. Confirms that an abduction has occurred.
 - b. An abducted child is under eighteen years of age.
 - c. The abduction poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to a child.
 - d. It is determined that the child is not a runaway and has not been abducted as a result of a child custody dispute, unless the dispute poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the child.
 - e. There is sufficient descriptive information about the child, the abductor, and the circumstances surrounding the abduction to indicate that activation of the alert will help locate the child.
 3. **Ohio's Missing Adult Alert:** *Missing Adult Criteria: (All of the below listed criteria must be met before an alert can be issued O.R.C. 5501.522 (B))*
 - a. Confirms that the individual is missing.
 - b. The individual is 65 years of age or older or has a mental impairment.
 - c. The disappearance of the individual poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the individual.
 - d. There is sufficient descriptive information about the individual and the circumstances surrounding the individual's

disappearance to indicate that activation of the alert will help locate the individual.

- D. Establish a command post if needed. *A command post is a field headquarters for scene management. It is used as a center for organizing personnel and directing investigative efforts as well as a focal point for inquiries, intelligence gathering, and media contacts. As a general rule the command post should be close enough to the center of activity to facilitate control and coordination, but sufficiently apart to allow a free exchange of ideas among responders. Using the victim's home as a command post is not recommended.*
- E. Organize and coordinate search efforts. *A supervisor should appoint a search operation coordinator who can oversee the search effort while the supervisor remains available to manage the entire investigation.*
 - 1. When carrying out a search, try to provide maps of the area and a photograph of the child to searchers. Teams of at least two individuals should be assigned and when searching, once again, an area already covered, different teams of searchers should be assigned. Be aware individuals involved in the abduction or any cover-up of the abduction have been known to volunteer in search operations.
 - 2. Search Fundamentals:
 - a. Maintain separate search activity log for each search.
 - b. Log names and affiliations of all searchers, both law enforcement and civilians, along with their general area of search assignment.
 - c. Thoroughly brief search-team leaders with all information needed to conduct a complete operation.
 - d. Instruct all searchers about the search pattern(s) to be used and techniques employed.
 - e. Instruct searchers to bring items found to the attention of the appropriate search-team leader without touching or disturbing them.
 - f. Control searchers so no one works alone.
 - g. Document all search activity.

- h. Safeguard against the use of inappropriate individuals in the search process.
- 3. Based on the circumstances of the child's disappearance, these issues should consider:
 - a. Deploying canine units, both air and ground scent.
 - b. Forcing entry into abandoned cars including trunks and spare-tire wells.
 - c. Sealing off any apartment complex where the child was last observed and searching vehicles as they leave the complex.
 - d. Requesting the presence of a prosecutor/county attorney for assistance in search-warrant preparation.
 - e. Conducting a systematic and thoroughly documented search.
 - f. Notifying and revisiting homes in which no one was originally found during the initial search.
 - g. Using search and rescue organizations, fire departments, military units, explorer scout groups, and other volunteers for large-scale search operations.
 - h. Identifying all non-sworn searchers.
 - i. Videotaping the search as it commences and progresses to verify participants.
- F. Ensure that all required notifications have been made. *Because dissemination of information is an integral part of the search for a missing person, the supervisor should ensure that all deputies, other departments and agencies, and all investigative networks are supplied with accurate details.*
- G. Establish a liaison with the victim family. *Families of a missing person will experience extreme stress. Supervisors should establish a liaison with the victim family who can explain what investigative actions are being employed and what they can do to assist in the search.*
- H. Confirm that all office policies and procedures are observed.
- I. At the direction of the Sheriff or Chief Deputy manage media relations. *Many missing-person investigations, especially those involving large-scale search efforts, are likely to draw media attention. Supervisors should*

manage media presence in a way that complements, rather than conflicts with the investigation.

.04 The **Deputy** assigned to the report of a missing person shall:

- A. Obtain a briefing from agency personnel at the scene. *This briefing should be conducted prior to interviews with family members of the missing person or witnesses who may have been identified during the initial stage of the case. Its objective is to assist the investigator in formulating an effective interview strategy.*
- B. Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information. *The verification process should include all details developed during the preliminary investigation. During the interview process the investigator should be alert to facts or statements that conflict with those gathered by the first responder.*
- C. Initiate a neighborhood investigation if appropriate. *A thorough canvass of the neighborhood should be conducted without delay. The objective is to identify and interview all persons within the abduction zone who may be able to provide information related to the incident. Investigators should use a standardized set of questions to ensure completeness and uniformity of information and facilitate establishment of a database to track leads. A record should also be made of all vehicles parked within the neighborhood and any other conditions that may have future investigative value. Access should also be made to the Sex Offender Registration list to determine if individuals designated as sexual predators reside, work, or might otherwise be associated with the area.*
- D. Obtain a brief history of recent family dynamics. *Information about family dynamics, obtained from family members, neighbors, teachers, classmates, employers, coworkers, friends, and witnesses, can offer valuable insights into what may have happened to the missing person and where he or she may be found. Records of family contact maintained by law-enforcement agencies, social-service departments, schools, and other organizations should also be obtained and evaluated.*
- E. Explore the basis for conflicting information. *When preliminary investigative steps have been taken, investigators should "compare notes" with the first responder, fellow investigators, and other agency personnel to identify and work through conflicting information. This collaborative evaluation will provide the investigative staff with a solid foundation upon which to structure future case directions.*
- F. Implement effective case management. *Depending on the resources available, information may either be computerized or incorporated in a*

simple card system. Both methods are used to record, index, cross-reference, and retrieve the facts amassed during an investigation. The method doesn't matter as long as the system works for the investigator in charge of solving the case.

- G. Evaluate the need for additional resources and specialized services. *The complexity of many missing-person incidents may necessitate the use of resources and services both from within the agency and from other organizations as well. Investigators should be aware of the input that can be obtained from resources such as the FBI; NCIC; and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children — in particular **Team Adam**, which is a rapid-response team of experienced law enforcement investigators.*
 - H. Update descriptive information. *If it appears that the case will not be promptly resolved, investigators should ensure that the descriptive record, especially that entered into the NCIC Missing Person File, is updated to include dental characteristics, scars, marks, tattoos, and fingerprints along with additional articles of clothing, jewelry, or unique possessions. **Note: The National Child Search Assistance Act – enacted in 1990 and amended by the PROTECT Act in 2003 – mandates the entry of descriptive information for all persons, birth through 20 years of age. These entries are required to be made no more than 60 days after the report is taken.***
 - I. Monitor media relations. *While information gained through effective media relations is often of significant value in a missing-person case, investigators should review all notices prior to release to ensure that investigative objectives are not unintentionally compromised.*
- .05 A deputy assigned to the report of an **unidentified person**, whether living or deceased, shall:
- A. Obtain a complete description. *Deputies who are assigned to this task should utilize standardized information-gathering forms such as the NCIC Unidentified Person File Worksheet.*
 - B. Enter the unidentified person's description into the NCIC Unidentified Person File. *This file is compared daily with the contents of the NCIC Missing Person File. Entries with common characteristics are flagged and both agencies are informed.*
 - C. Utilize all available resources to aid in identification of the person. *The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and state medical examiners may be of assistance in the identification.*

- D. Cancel all notifications after identification is confirmed.
- .06 A deputy assigned to the **recovery or return** of a missing person shall:
- A. Verify that the located person is, in fact, the reported missing person. *An officer should personally verify all returns. The benefits of this practice include assessing the person's safety, gaining intelligence about possible predators, and helping to prevent future episodes.*
 - B. Inform, in the case of a missing adult who has been located, the located person that he or she is the subject of a missing-person investigation. *If the located person is a competent adult, the deputy shall determine the person's willingness for law enforcement to reveal his or her whereabouts.*
 - C. Notify the initial reporting person(s) of the well-being and, if permissible, the whereabouts and contact information of the person who has been located.
 - D. Secure, in the case of a missing or abducted person who has been located, intervention services, if indicated. *During the verification process, deputies should be alert for indications that additional services may be needed before a located person can be safely reunited with his or her family. These services may include mental and/or physical health examinations and arrangements for family counseling.*
 - E. Arrange, in the case of a runaway or missing child from within the Sheriff's Office jurisdiction who has been located and who is not wanted on a warrant or other law violation, the return of the child to his or her legal guardian or to an appropriate children's shelter.
 - F. Place, in the case of a runaway from another jurisdiction or from out-of-state who has been located and for whom a warrant exists or for whom an NCIC missing person "hit" is verified, the child in custody and transport him or her to the appropriate facility for admission.
 - G. Complete the appropriate supplemental reports and cancel all outstanding notifications. Along with cancellation of the NCIC Missing Person File entry and other notifications regarding the case, a supplemental report should be completed that describes the person's activities while missing and circumstances of the recovery/return.

This checklist is meant to provide a framework of actions, considerations, and activities that may assist in performing competent, productive, and thorough missing/abducted children investigations.

First Responder

- If circumstances warrant, consider activating patrol-vehicle-mounted video camera when approaching the scene to record vehicles, people, and anything else of note for later investigative review.
- Interview parent(s)/guardian(s)/person who made the initial report.
- Confirm the child is in fact missing.
- Verify the child's custody status.
- Identify the circumstances of the disappearance.
- Determine when, where, and by whom the missing child was last seen.
- Interview the individuals who last had contact with the child.
- Identify the child's zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage.
- Based on the available information, make an **initial** determination of the type of incident whether nonfamily abduction; family abduction; runaway; or lost, injured, or otherwise missing.
- Obtain a **detailed** description of the missing child, abductor, and any vehicles used.
- Secure photographs/videotapes of the missing child/abductor.
- Evaluate whether the circumstances of the child's disappearance meet **AMBER Alert criteria** and/or other immediate community-notification protocol. Discuss plan activation with supervisor.
- Relay detailed descriptive information to communications unit for broadcast updates.
- Determine need for additional personnel including investigative and supervisory staff.
- Brief and bring up-to-date all additional responding personnel.
- Identify and separately interview everyone at the scene. Make sure their interview and identifying information is properly recorded. To aid in this process, if possible, take pictures or record video images of everyone present. Video cameras affixed to patrol vehicles may be helpful with this task.
 - Note name, address, home/business telephone numbers of each person.
 - Determine each person's relationship to the missing child.
 - Note information each person may have about the child's disappearance.
 - Determine when/where each person last saw the child.
 - Ask each one, "What do you think happened to the child?"
 - Obtain names/addresses/telephone numbers of the child's friends/associates and other relatives and friends of the family.
- Continue to keep communications unit apprised of all appropriate developing information for broadcast updates.
- Obtain and note permission to search home or building where incident took place.
- Conduct an immediate, thorough search of the missing child's home, **even if the child was reported missing from a different location.**
- Seal/protect scene and area of the child's home (including the child's personal articles such as hairbrush, diary, photographs, and items with the child's fingerprints/footprints/teeth impressions) so evidence is not destroyed during or after the initial search and to help ensure items which could help in the search for and/or to identify the child are preserved. Determine if any of the child's personal items are missing. If possible, photograph/videotape these areas.
- Evaluate the contents and appearance of the child's room/residence.
- Inquire if the child has access to the Internet and evaluate its role in the disappearance.
- Ascertain if the child has a cellular telephone or other electronic communication device.
- Extend search to surrounding areas including vehicles and other places of concealment.
- Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes.
- Determine if surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity may have captured information about the child's disappearance.
- Interview other family members, friends/associates of the child, and friends of the family to determine
 - When each last saw the child.
 - What they think happened to the child.
- Review sex-offender registries to determine if individuals designated as sexual predators live, work, or might otherwise be associated with the area of the child's disappearance.
- Ensure information regarding the missing child is entered into the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File within two hours of report receipt and any information about a suspected abductor is

entered into the NCIC Wanted Person File. (Carefully review NCIC categories before entering the case, and be sure to use the Child-Abduction flag whenever possible.)

- Prepare flier/bulletin with the child/abductor's photograph and descriptive information. Distribute in appropriate geographic regions.
- Prepare reports/make all required notifications.

Supervisory Officer

- Obtain briefing and written reports from the first responding officer and other personnel at the scene.
- Decide if circumstances of the child's disappearance meet the protocol in place for activation of an **AMBER Alert** and/or other immediate community-notification systems.
- Determine if additional personnel are needed to assist in the investigation.
- Establish a command post away from the child's residence.
- Determine if additional assistance is necessary from;
 - Other Law Enforcement agencies.
 - Missing-Children Clearinghouse.
 - FBI.
 - Specialized Units.
 - Victim-Witness Services.
 - NCMEC's Project ALERT/Team Adam.
- Confirm all the required resources, equipment, and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested and expedite their availability.
- Ensure coordination/cooperation among all law-enforcement personnel involved in the investigation and search effort.
- Verify all required notifications are made.
- Ensure all agency policies and procedures are in compliance.
- Be available to make any decisions or determinations as they develop.
- Use media including radio, television, and newspapers to assist in the search throughout the duration of the case.

Investigative Deputy

- Obtain briefing from the first responding officer and other on-scene personnel.
- Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
- Initiate a neighborhood canvass using a standardized questionnaire.
- Obtain a brief, recent history of family dynamics.
- Correct and investigate the reasons for conflicting information offered by witnesses and other individuals.
- Collect article(s) of the child's clothing for scent-tracking purposes.
- Review and evaluate all available information and evidence collected.
- Secure the child's latest medical and dental records.
- Contact landfill management and request they segregate garbage and dumping containers from key investigative areas in cases where it is suspected there may be imminent danger to the missing child.
- Develop and execute an investigative plan.
- Conduct a criminal-history check on all principal suspects and participants in the investigation.
- Determine what additional resources and specialized services are required.
- Ensure details of the case have been reported to NCMEC.
- Prepare and update bulletins for local law-enforcement agencies, missing-children clearinghouse(s), the FBI, and other appropriate agencies.
- Establish a telephone hotline for receipt of tips and leads.
- Establish a leads-management system to prioritize leads and help ensure each one is reviewed and followed up on. **Note:** NCMEC has developed software, named the Simple Leads Management System, designed to manage and prioritize leads associated with missing-child investigations. It is available at no cost by calling NCMEC's Missing Children Division toll-free at 1-888-24-NCMEC (1-888-246-2632).

Review all steps outlined in the "Initial-Response Investigative Checklist". In addition, in cases of nonfamily abduction, consider the steps listed below.

Initial Investigation

- Assign an investigator to victim's residence with the ability to record and "trap and trace" all incoming calls. Consider setting up a separate telephone line or cellular telephone for agency use.
- Conduct neighborhood/vehicle canvass.
- Compile list of known sex offenders in the region.
- Develop profile of possible abductor.
- Consider use of polygraph for parents/guardians and other key individuals.
- In cases of infant abduction, investigate claims of home births made in that area.
- Fully load National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File within two hours of report receipt (involuntary category) with complete descriptive information, medical information, dental information, and use the Child-Abduction ("CA") flag as described in "Appendix B: NCIC Child-Abduction Flag" on page 215.
- Use Nlets and other information systems to alert local, state, regional, and federal law-enforcement agencies.
- Review records found in various law-enforcement databases, including Nlets, for attempted abductions with case similarities.
- Provide support for family through nonprofit, missing-children organization.

Prolonged Investigation

- Reread all reports and transcripts of interviews.
- Revisit the crime scene.
- Review all potential witness/suspect information obtained in the initial investigation and consider background checks for anyone identified in the investigation.
- Review all photographs and videotapes.

Review all steps outlined in the "Initial-Response Investigative Checklist". In addition, in cases of family abduction, consider the steps listed below. Please consult the text of this chapter for details about the items listed.

The Initial Investigation

- Examine court records. To help ensure accuracy and current status of information, check with the issuing judge/clerk of that court.
- Conduct a background investigation of both parents/guardians.
- Provide tasks for left-behind parent/guardian.
- Interview family members and friends of the abductor.
- Enter information about the child and abductor within two hours of report receipt into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File (Involuntary Category). See "Appendix A: NCIC Missing-Person-File Categories" beginning on page 213 for definitions of NCIC categories.
- Obtain and evaluate all information that may indicate location of abductor.
- Consider use of civil procedures such as Writ of Habeas Corpus (pickup order) and Writ of Assistance.
- Confirm all civil orders imposed with the issuing judge or clerk of that court.
- Coordinate the issuance of a civil bench warrant or, if necessary, an arrest warrant for the abductor.
- Coordinate the issuance of a family-court, pick-up order for the child.
- Confirm entry of warrant information into NCIC's Missing Person File (child) and Wanted Person File (abductor).
- Provide support for family through nonprofit, missing-children organization(s).

The Prolonged Investigation

- Once all civil remedies have been exhausted in interstate, domestic cases, secure a federal Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution (UFAP) warrant if facts support issuance. For international cases contact the International Missing Children's Division of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) toll-free at 1-888-24-NCMEC (1-888-246-2632) to seek assistance in regard to identifying the appropriate remedy in a given international case such as the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Hague Convention) or an International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act (IPKCA, Pub. L. No. 103-173) warrant where this Hague Convention is not applicable.
- Identify and "flag" all pertinent sources of information about both the child, such as school, medical, birth, and abductor such as employment, education, professional associations.
- Use information sources such as credit bureaus, database systems, motor vehicle bureaus, and the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS, 42 U.S.C. § 663 (1988)), child-support services to search for abductor(s) through identifiers such as Social Security Number, name, and date of birth.

- Request U.S. Postal Service authorities to provide change-of-address information and assistance in setting up a mail cover, when appropriate, on selected family members or friends of the abductor.
- Identify and evaluate other records about abductor that may provide information such as employment records, occupational licenses, organization memberships, social interests, hobbies, and other lifestyle indicators.
- Assist left-behind parent/guardian in missing-child poster preparation and distribution.

International Abductions

- Contact the U.S. Department of State and NCMEC's International Missing Children's Division toll-free at 1-888-24-NCMEC (1-888-246-2632) for assistance in civil aspects of the abduction and potential for return of the child through legal and diplomatic channels. NCMEC's International Missing Children's Division also provides legal-technical assistance for these investigations and is able to assess whether other agencies could provide additional resources in the case.
- Seek information from Interpol, the International Criminal Police Organization, concerning criminal proceedings against the abductor.
- Become familiar with customs and laws concerning custody matters in the country in which the abductor may be retaining the child.

Recovery/Case Closure

- If recovery involves another state, ascertain what enforcement provisions are available through that state's Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act or Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act.
- Notify child-protective-service workers about the possible need for temporary shelter care until the left-behind parent/guardian or investigator arrives.
- Execute civil habeas corpus or arrest abductor away from the child if possible.
- Conduct separate, thorough interviews of the child and abductor. Document the results of the interviews, and involve all appropriate agencies.
- Provide effective reunification techniques using the guidelines in "Reunification Issues of Family Abduction" beginning on page 103.
- Cancel alarms and remove case from NCIC and other information systems.

Note: To request technical assistance for specific cases, please call NCMEC toll free at **1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)**.

66007.00 Runaway Child Investigative Checklist

Review all steps outlined in the "Initial-Response Investigative Checklist" In addition, in cases of runaway children, consider the steps listed below.

The Initial Investigation

- Check agency records for recent contact with child (arrests, other activity).
- Review school records and interview teachers, other school personnel, classmates.
- Check contents of school locker.
- Evaluate whether Internet involvement may be a factor in the disappearance.
- Enter information about the child within two hours of report receipt into the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File. (See "Appendix A: NCIC Missing-Person-File Categories" beginning on page 213 for definitions of NCIC categories.)
- Contact community, child-serving organizations for information.
- Investigate child-protective-agency records for abuse reports.
- Use screening procedures to develop an accurate assessment of the child.

The Prolonged Investigation

- Update initial NCIC entry by fully loading NCIC Missing Person File with all available information including medical and dental records.
- Consider upgrading NCIC category if facts warrant.
- Reinterview friends, classmates, and other information sources.
- Assist family members in the preparation and distribution of missingchild posters.
- Provide support for family through nonprofit, missing-children organization(s).
- Consider a search of NCIC's Unidentified Person File, use of NCIC's Off-Line Search capabilities, and notification of state medical examiners by providing descriptive information and a photograph of the missing child.

Recovery/Case Closure

- Conduct a thorough interview of the child, document the results of the interview, and involve all appropriate agencies.
- Why did the child leave?
- Where did the child go?
- How did the child survive?
- Who helped the child during his or her absence?
- Will the child leave again?
- Use the Interstate Compact or other runaway return programs.
- Determine need for a comprehensive physical examination for the child.
- Consider one-party consent telephone calls if the child discloses abuse or exploitation.
- Make child/family aware of community services to address any unresolved issues.
- Complete an agency report of the episode that may be promptly accessed and reviewed if the child leaves again.
- Cancel alarms and remove the case from NCIC and other information systems.

66008.00 SAMPLE VOLUNTEER/SEARCHER LOG

| CASE NUMBER | | DATE | DEPUTYS NAME | | SEARCH LOCATION |
|-------------|------|-------------------|--------------|-----|-------------------------|
| | | | | | |
| ID No. | Name | Address/Telephone | | DOB | Area Searched & Remarks |
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Notes:

1. Every individual involved in the search should be logged and provided with some form of numbered ID.
2. Be wary of individuals anxious to search with insufficient ID or not from the immediate area.
3. All searchers must return their issued ID at the conclusion of search activity.

66009.00 SAMPLE VEHICLE – CANVASS LOG

| CASE NUMBER | | DATE | | DEPUTYS NAME | |
|-------------|----------|---------|-------|--------------|---|
| | | | | | |
| Time | Location | Tag No. | Color | Make & Model | Remarks (Include Circumstances, occupants) |
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- Notes:
1. List **all** vehicles observed on both sides of the street whether parked on street, in driveways, or public parking areas.
 2. **All** vehicles in the canvass area must be fully documented.
 3. Occupants of vehicles must be fully identified, field interviewed, and completely described.