

GENERAL ORDER XXXVI

SUBJECT: MISSING CHILDREN'S POLICY

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07-23-08 **REVIEW DATE:** 03-01-2015

NOTE: This rule or regulation is for internal use only and does not enlarge an officer's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

I. Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and responsibilities regarding this agency's response to reports of missing children.

II. Policy Statement

A. It shall be the policy of this agency to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing children. Additionally this agency holds that every child reported as missing will be considered **at risk** until significant information to the contrary is confirmed.

B. Jurisdictional conflicts are to be avoided when a child is reported missing. If a missing child either resides in, or was last seen in this jurisdiction, this agency will immediately initiate the required reporting process. If a child 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 child report, this agency will assume reporting and investigate responsibility

C. 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 (children) is paramount, members of this agency will open a case when it can be shown that the child has been removed, without explanation, from his or her usual place of residence.

III. Definitions

A. The term **missing child** refers to a person who is

1. Younger than 18 years of age and

2. Whose whereabouts are unknown to his or her parent, guardian, or responsible party.

B. A missing child will be considered “**at risk**” when one or more of the **unusual circumstances** noted in paragraph C are present.

C. The term **unusual circumstances** refers to a missing child who is:

1. 13 years of age or younger.

2. Believed to be one or more of the items noted below:

a. Out of the zone of safety for his or her age, development stage, and/or physical condition.

b. Mentally diminished.

c. Drug dependent, including both prescription and illicit substances.

d. A potential victim of foul play.

e. In a life-threatening situation.

f. Absent from home for more than 6 hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing.

g. Believed to be with others who could endanger his or her welfare.

h. Is absent under circumstances inconsistent with established patterns of behavior. Or

3. Whose disappearance involves circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that the child should be considered at risk.

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

1. If it is determined that **unusual circumstances** are involved in the report of a missing child, the child will be considered **at risk** and an expanded investigation, including the use of all appropriate resources, will immediately commence.

2. If appropriate, existing interagency response protocols – including the **AMBER Alert** system, if available – should be activated.

IV. Procedures

A. Communication personnel receiving the report shall

1. Promptly dispatch an officer to the scene of the report.

2. Notify a supervisor.

3. Transmit the appropriate radio alerts and other notifications.

4. Search agency records for related information

5. Safeguard all pertinent records.

6. Initiate media contact – including activation of the **AMBER Alert** system and/or other immediate, community-notification methods when appropriate.

B. The **initial officer** or first responder assigned to the report of a missing child shall

1. Determine if circumstances of the report meet the definition of a missing child set for in Section III.

2. Respond promptly to the scene of the report.

3. Interview the parent(s) or person who made the report.

4. Obtain a description of the missing child including photograph(s) and Videotapes.

5. Verify that the child is in fact missing.

6. Confirm the child's custody.

7. Identify the circumstances of the disappearance.

8. Determine when, where and by whom the missing child was last seen.

9. Interview the individual(s) who last had contact with the missing child.

10. Identify the child's zone of safety for his or her age, development stage, And physical and mental state.

11. Make an initial determination of the type of incident.

12. Obtain a description of the suspected abductor(s) and other pertinent Information.

13. Determine the correct NCIC Missing Person File category and ensure that a notification is promptly transmitted.

14. Provide detailed descriptive information to communications unit for Broadcast updates.

15. Identify and interview everyone at the scene.

16. Conduct a thorough search of the scene.

17. Secure and safeguard the area as a potential crime scene.

18. Record if the child has access to an online computer, cellular phone, and/or pager.

19. Prepare necessary reports and complete appropriate forms.

C. The **supervisor** assigned to the report of a missing child shall

1. Obtain a briefing from the first responder(s) and other agency personnel at the scene.

2. Determine if additional personnel and resources are needed to assist in the investigation. (Consider contacting FBI)

3. Consider activation of the **AMBER Alert** system and/or other immediate community notification methods.

4. Establish a command post.

5. Organize and coordinate search efforts.

6. Ensure that all required notifications have been made.

7. Establish a liaison with the victim family.

8. Confirm that all agency policies and procedures are observed.

9. Manage media relations.

A. The **investigator** assigned to the report of a missing child shall

1. Obtain a briefing from agency personnel at the scene

2. Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information.

3. Conduct a neighborhood investigation.

4. Obtain a brief history of recent family dynamics.

5. Explore the basis for conflicting information.

6. Implement effective case management.

7. Evaluate the need for additional resources and specialized services.

8. Update descriptive information.

9. Monitor media relations.

B. An officer assigned to the report of an **unidentified person**, whether living or deceased who appears to be a child shall,

1. Obtain a complete description.

2. Enter the unidentified child's description in the NCIC Unidentified Person File.

3. Utilize all available resources to aid in identification of the child.

4. Cancel all notifications after identification is confirmed.

C. An officer assigned to the **recovery of return** of a missing child shall

1. Verify that the located child is, in fact, the reported missing child.
2. Secure intervention services, if needed.
3. Arrange, in the case of a runaway or missing child from within the department 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 an appropriate children's shelter.
4. 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, place the child in custody and transport him or her to the appropriate facility for processing.
5. Complete the appropriate supplemental reports and cancel all outstanding notifications.

Note: In some cases a Missouri Endangered Person Advisory may be completed.

"FOR EXAMPLES OF ALERTS SEE ATTACHMENT 1 OR 2"

Attachment 1

MISSOURI AMBER ALERT ABDUCTION FORM

This form is for use by law enforcement officials only 1

Follow this procedure to initiate a MISSOURI AMBER ALERT

Make sure you complete and fax all three (3) pages of this abduction form

1. **LOCAL AMBER ALERT** - Issue a local AMBER or SARAA alert. If you do not have access to a local alert system, skip this step.
2. **NCIC ENTRY** - Make a NCIC missing person entry using the child abduction (CA) flag through the law enforcement computer system available in your area (MULES, REGIS, ALERT, etc.)
3. **SCREEN AGAINST CRITERIA** - Verify that ALL of the following MISSOURI AMBER ALERT abduction criteria have been met:

Check all that apply:

Law enforcement officials have reasonable belief that an abduction has occurred, which meets the definition in RSMo. 565.110 or 565.115.

Law enforcement officials believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.

Enough descriptive information exists about the victim and the abductor for law enforcement to issue an AMBER Alert.

The victim of the abduction is a child age 17 years or younger.

The child's name and other critical data elements - including the child abduction (CA) flag - have been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system.

Note: Parental disputes do not apply unless a possibility of harm to the child has been determined.

4. IF ALL OF THE CRITERIA ARE MET COMPLETE THIS FORM AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW. THIS FORM WILL ALSO BE USED FOR UPDATES AND CANCELLATIONS.

A. What type of alert is this?

Initial Alert

Update

Cancellation

B. Has a local abduction alert been issued?

Yes

No

MISSOURI AMBER ALERT ABDUCTION FORM

This form is for use by law enforcement officials only 2

C. Victim's name: _____

D. Law enforcement agency requesting alert: _____

E. Officer(s) verifying criteria and requesting alert: _____

F. Agency case/incident number: _____

G. Phone number for law enforcement to contact your agency: _____

H. Phone number for the media to contact your agency: _____

I. Complete the attached alert message format worksheet or attach the NCIC message on a separate sheet. As indicated on the worksheet, the message should include:

(1) Description of the victim;

(2) Time, location, and description of abduction;

(3) If known, description of the suspect, including vehicle and direction of travel.

J. Photographs/Maps. You may attach relevant photographs, maps, or other useful attachments.

K. Certifications. The law enforcement officer authorizing this alert must sign and date below.

Rank/Name of authorizing officer Date Time

5. TRANSMISSION. Transmit this form and any attachment to:

MISSOURI AMBER ALERT

c/o Missouri State Highway Patrol, Troop F

Fax number: (573) 751-6814 / Telephone number: (573) 751-1000

Please verify by telephone that your fax has been received

MISSOURI AMBER ALERT ABDUCTION FORM

This form is for use by law enforcement officials only

PLEASE COMPLETE AND FAX THE BELOW WORKSHEET WITH THE ABDUCTION FORM

AMBER Alert Message Format fill-in-the-blank format for section H

“This is an AMBER alert.....

The (agency) has issued an AMBER Alert for a

1) child abduction

2) that occurred at _____ (location)

3) at (time in AM or PM)

4) on _____ (date).

5) Abducted was (1) _____ (name),

a _____ (race) _____ (sex) _____ (age)

(2) _____ (name),

a _____ (race) _____ (sex) _____ (age)

(3) _____ (name),

a _____ (race) _____ (sex) _____ (age)

6) Suspect vehicle is a

_____ (color) _____ (year)

_____ (make) _____ (model)

bearing _____ (state) _____ (license)

last seen _____

_____ (location and direction of travel).

7) The suspect is believed to be _____ (name),

a _____ (race) _____ (sex) age _____ (age)

_____ (height) _____ (weight) _____ (hair)

_____ (eyes) _____ (complexion)

_____ (physical marks)
wearing _____ (clothing).

8) The victim (1), _____ (name),
is a _____ (race) _____ (sex) _____ (age)
_____ (height) _____ (weight) _____ (hair)
_____ (eyes) _____ (complexion)

_____ (physical marks)
wearing _____ (clothing).

The victim (2), _____ (name),
is a _____ (race) _____ (sex) _____ (age)
_____ (height) _____ (weight) _____ (hair)
_____ (eyes) _____ (complexion)

_____ (physical marks)
wearing _____ (clothing).

The victim (3), _____ (name),
is a _____ (race) _____ (sex) _____ (age)
_____ (height) _____ (weight) _____ (hair)
_____ (eyes) _____ (complexion)

_____ (physical marks)
wearing _____ (clothing).

9) Anyone seeing the victim, suspect, or vehicle or anyone having any information related to the abduction should immediately dial 911 to contact the nearest law enforcement agency or call the _____ (agency)

at _____ (agency contact phone number). Please stay tuned to this station for further developments.”

Attachment 2

MISSOURI ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY FORM

This form is for use by law enforcement officials only

Follow this procedure to initiate an ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY

Make sure you complete and fax all three (3) pages of this advisory form

1. SCREEN AGAINST CRITERIA - Verify the following MISSOURI AMBER ALERT abduction criteria to insure this missing person doesn't meet the AMBER ALERT criteria:

Law enforcement officials have reasonable belief that an abduction has occurred, which meets the definition in RSMo. 565.110 or 565.115.

Law enforcement officials believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.

Enough descriptive information exists about the victim and the abductor for law enforcement to issue an AMBER Alert.

The victim of the abduction is a child age 17 years or younger.

IF ALL OF THE ABOVE CRITERIA ARE PRESENT SUBMIT AN AMBER ALERT ABDUCTION FORM IMMEDIATELY.

2. If the missing person criteria don't meet ALL of the AMBER ALERT criteria, SCREEN AGAINST THE ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY CRITERIA.

Do the circumstances fail to meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert? (If they do meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert, immediately follow the protocol to issue an AMBER Alert)

Is the person missing under unexplained, involuntary, or suspicious circumstances?

Is the person believed to be in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, environment or weather conditions, in the company of a potentially dangerous person or some other factor that may put the person in peril?

Is there information that could assist the public in the safe recovery of the missing person?

3. NCIC ENTRY - Make a NCIC missing person entry using the Endangered Missing EME code through the law enforcement computer system available in your area (MULES, REGIS, ALERT, etc.)

4. IF ALL OF THE ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY CRITERIA ARE MET COMPLETE THIS FORM AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW.

THIS FORM WILL ALSO BE USED FOR UPDATES AND CANCELLATIONS.

MISSOURI ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY FORM

This form is for use by law enforcement officials only

A. What type of advisory is this?

Initial advisory

Update

Cancellation

B. Has any type of a local advisory been issued?

Yes

No

C. Missing person's name: _____

D. Law enforcement agency requesting advisory: _____

E. Officer(s) verifying criteria and requesting advisory: _____

F. Agency case/incident number: _____

G. Phone number for law enforcement to contact your agency: _____

H. Cellular phone number for the State Coordinator to contact the investigating officer

I. Phone number for the media to contact your agency: _____

J. Complete the attached advisory message format worksheet or attach the NCIC message on a separate sheet. As indicated on the worksheet, the message should include:

(1) description of the missing person(s);

(2) time, location, and description of incident;

(3) if known, description of any suspects or associates, including vehicle and direction of travel.

K. Photographs/Maps. You may attach relevant photographs, maps, or other useful attachments.

L. Certifications. The law enforcement officer authorizing this advisory must sign and date below.

Rank/Name of authorizing officer Date Time

5. TRANSMISSION. Transmit this form and any attachment to:

MISSOURI ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY

c/o Missouri State Highway Patrol, Troop F

Fax number: (573) 751-6814 / Telephone number: (573) 751-1000

Please verify by telephone that your fax has been received

MISSOURI ENDANGERED PERSON ADVISORY FORM

This form is for use by law enforcement officials only

PLEASE COMPLETE AND FAX THE BELOW WORKSHEET WITH THE ADVISORY FORM

State of Missouri Endangered Person Advisory

enforcement agency or call the _____ (agency) at _____
(agency contact phone number).

A. This policy is issued by the authority of the Chief of Police. Any policy additions, deviations or revisions shall be made only at the direction of the Chief of Police.

By Authority of:

Jeffrey S. Head, Chief of Police