

## **214 Response to Reports of Missing and Endangered Children**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and responsibilities for the consistent response to, and investigation of, all reports of missing and endangered children as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, subd. 1, (c) and (e). (Minnesota Missing Children Program).

This policy addresses only those investigations where the missing child has been determined to be both missing and endangered.

**Policy:** The agencies recognize that there is a critical need for immediate and consistent response to reports of missing and endangered children. The decisions made and actions taken during the preliminary states have a profound affect on the outcome of the case. Therefore, this law enforcement agency has established the following responsibilities and guidelines for the investigation of missing and endangered children. All peace officers employed by this agency will be informed of, and comply with, the following required procedures.

After this law enforcement agency has received a report of a missing child, obtained the basic facts of the case, descriptions of the missing child and abductor (if known), and determined that there is sufficient evidence to believe that the child is endangered, the agency will respond according to the following five types of general procedures: 1) Initial Response, 2) Initial Investigation, 3) Investigation, 4) Prolonged Investigation, and 5) Recovery/Case Closure. The facts surrounding each missing and endangered child report will dictate when the procedures are warranted, and what the order and priority should be within each of the five categories. However, each of the procedures must be carried out immediately as circumstances warrant and many of the steps will need to be simultaneously.

**Definitions:** Missing - According to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, subd.1, (c), missing means "the status of a child after a law enforcement agency that has received a report of a missing child has conducted a preliminary investigation and determined that the child cannot be located."

Endangered - According to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, subd.1, (e) endangered means that "a law enforcement official has received sufficient evidence that the child is with a person who presents a threat of immediate physical injury to the child or physical or sexual abuse of the child."

Child - According to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, subd.1, (a), child means "any person under the age of 18 years or any person certified or known to be mentally incompetent."

Sufficient Evidence - means articulable facts and circumstance which would induce a reasonably prudent police or peace officer to believe that a crime has been or is about to be committed.

NCIC - means the National Crime Information Center

CJIS - means the Criminal Justice Information System

## PROCEDURES

### I. INITIAL RESPONSE PROCEDURES

- A. Dispatch an officer to the scene to conduct a preliminary investigation.
- B. Obtain interpretive services if necessary.
- C. Interview parent(s) person who made the initial complaint.
- D. Determine, when, where, and by whom the missing child was last seen.
- E. Interview the individuals who last had contact with the child.
- F. Obtain a detailed description of the missing child/abductor/vehicles/etc.
- G. Load the NCIC Missing Person File (involuntary category) with complete descriptive, and critical information regarding the missing and endangered child.
- H. Load the NCIC system with complete descriptive information regarding suspect(s).
- I. Request investigative and supervisory assistance.
- J. Update additional responding personnel.
- K. Broadcast known details, on all police communication channels, to other patrol units, other local law enforcement agencies, and surrounding law enforcement agencies and, if necessary, use the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications Systems (NLETS) and the Minnesota Crime Alert Network to alert state, regional, and federal law enforcement agencies.
- L. Notify the family of crime victim services available, and, give the family the Crime Victim Services card.
- M. Seal the crime scene, do not allow individuals to leave the area until interviewed, and note anyone who may have left just prior to the arrival of law enforcement.
- N. Activate protocols for working with the media.
- O. As required by Minnesota Statute, chapter 299C.53, subd. 1, contact the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension regarding the incident. Request assistance as necessary.
- P. Implement multi-jurisdictional coordination/mutual aid plan as necessary, for example:
  1. When the primary agency has limited resources,

2. When the investigation crosses jurisdictional lines, and
3. When jurisdictions have pre-established task forces or investigative teams.

## II. INITIAL INVESTIGATION

- A. Conduct a neighborhood/vehicle canvass.
- B. Arrange for use of helpful media coverage.
- C. Maintain records of telephone communications/messages.
- D. Ensure that everyone at the scene is identified and interviewed separately.
- E. Search the home or building where the incident took place and conduct search including all surrounding areas. Obtain consent or a search warrant if necessary.
- F. Assign a trained an/or experienced investigator whose duties will include coordination of the investigation.

## III. INVESTIGATION

- A. Begin setting up the Command Post/Operation Base away from the child's residence: know the specific responsibilities of the Command Post Supervisor, Media Specialist, Search Coordinator, Communication Officer, Support Unit Coordinator, and two liaison officers (one at command post, one at victim's residence). The role of the liaison at the home will include facilitating support and advocacy for the family.
- B. Establish the ability to "trap and trace" all incoming calls. Consider setting up a separate telephone line or cellular telephone for emergency use.
- C. Compile a list of known sex offenders in the region.
- D. In cases of infant abduction, investigate claims of home births made in that area.
- E. Obtain child protective agency records for reports or abuse on child.
- F. Review records for previous incidents related to the missing child and prior police activity in the area including prowler, indecent exposure, attempted abductions, etc.
- G. Obtain the child's medical and dental records.



- H. Update the NCIC missing person file with any additional information regarding the child or suspect as necessary.
- I. Interview delivery personnel; employees of gas, water, electric, and cable companies; taxi driver; post office personnel; sanitation worker; etc.
- J. Contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) for photo dissemination, and other case assistance.
- K. Determine if outside help is necessary and utilize local and state resources related to specialized investigative needs, including:
  - 1. Crime Victim Advocates,
  - 2. Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension,
  - 3. Federal Bureau of Investigation,
  - 4. County Attorney,
  - 5. Customs Investigative Services,
  - 6. Minnesota State Patrol,
  - 7. Minnesota Crime Alert Network,
  - 8. Investigative experts in the areas of sexual assault, child maltreatment, and/or homicide,
  - 9. Searches:
    - a. Ground Searches-Manpower, Vehicles and/or mounted patrols
    - b. Canine assisted
    - c. Water and underwater Searches, and
    - d. Air Searches
  - 10. Investigative Resources:
    - a. Child Interviewing,
    - b. Polygraph,
    - c. Profiling/Behavioral Analysis,

- d. MN Sex and Violent Crime Analysis Programs,
  - e. Crime Analysis/Computer Assistance,
  - f. Forensic Artistry/Crime Scene and Evidence Processing, and
  - g. Memory Retrieval.
- 11. Interpretive Services
  - 12. The Department of Natural Resources
  - 13. Telephone Services (traps, traces, etc.), and
  - 14. Medical Assistance (Local and National).

#### IV. PROLONGED INVESTIGATION

- A. Develop a profile on the possible abductor.
- B. Consider the use of polygraph for the parents and other key individuals.
- C. Re-read all reports and transcripts of interviews, revisit the crime scene, review all photographs and videotapes, re-interview key individuals, and reexamine all physical evidence collected.
- D. Review all potential witness/suspect information obtained in the initial investigation and consider background checks on anyone identified in the investigation.
- E. Develop time-line and other visual exhibits.
- F. Critique results of the on-going investigation with appropriate investigative resources.
- G. Arrange for periodic media coverage.
- H. Utilize rewards and crime stoppers programs.
- I. Update NCIC Missing Person File information as necessary.
- J. Re-contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) for age progression assistance.

#### V. RECOVERY/CASE CLOSURE

- A. Arrange for a comprehensive physical examination of the victim.



- B. Conduct a careful interview, and involve all appropriate agencies.
- C. Refer family for effective reunification assistance.
- D. Cancel alarms and remove case from NCIC and other information systems, and remove posters and other publications from circulation.
- E. Perform constructive post-case critique. Re-assess the procedures used.

