

PALM BEACH GARDENS POLICE DEPARTMENT		
MISSING PERSONS		
POLICY AND PROCEDURE 4.2.1.21		
<b>Effective Date :</b> 02/04/2014	<b>Accreditation Standards:</b> CALEA 41.2.5, 41.2.6 CFA 18.14M	<b>Review Date:</b> 03/01/2016

## CONTENTS

1. General Procedures
  2. Additional Procedures for Missing Children
  3. Searches for Missing/Lost Persons
  4. Criminal Abductions
  5. Parental Abduction
  6. Runaways
  7. Amber Alerts for Missing Children
  8. A Child Is Missing Program (ACIM)
  9. Silver Alert
  10. Project Lifesaver
  11. Recovered Missing Persons
  12. Missing Persons Reported by other Agencies
  13. Unidentified Persons
  14. Glossary
- Appendix: Criteria and Steps for Activation of Amber Alert**

**PURPOSE:** To establish responsibilities and guidelines for the Department's response to reports of missing persons.

**SCOPE:** This policy and procedure applies to all Department members.

**REVIEW RESPONSIBILITY:** Assistant Chiefs and Bureau Majors

**POLICY:** It is the policy of the Department to thoroughly and promptly investigate all cases of persons missing under circumstances which indicate the missing person may be at risk or endangered. In all cases involving a missing child, the child will be considered at risk until information to the contrary is confirmed. The Department will also thoroughly and promptly investigate all cases of unidentified persons (persons either deceased or otherwise unable to identify themselves) occurring within the City. The Department will not conduct investigations into those cases involving adults missing without unusual or suspicious circumstances or foul play being suspected. Persons trying to locate long-lost relatives or old friends, an adoptive child trying to locate his/her natural parents, etc. will be referred to a private investigator or agency providing that service. The Department will respect the privacy of located adult missing persons who do not want their whereabouts divulged as long as the person is of sound mind and has not broken the law.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE:** Ensuring that calls about missing or abducted children are handled correctly is critical to the individuals involved in those cases and to the goals within the Missing Kids Readiness Project (MKRP).

**PROCEDURES****1. GENERAL PROCEDURES**

- a. A missing person report will be taken whenever a person is missing under circumstances that indicate the person may be endangered, missing involuntarily, disabled, a catastrophe or accident victim, an overdue traveler, or missing under other unusual or suspicious circumstances that warrant police intervention, and the missing person is either a resident of the City or the person was last seen or known to have been in the City. There is no “waiting period” before a report can be taken under these circumstances.
- b. Officers should be alert to the length of time the person has been missing compared to the person’s normal habits and behavior as reported by the complainant and witnesses may constitute unusual or suspicious circumstances.
- c. A missing person report will not be taken just because the complainant “has not heard from” or has been “unable to contact” an adult missing person, especially in the case of out of area complainants, unless a documented previous pattern of contact or other information/evidence makes the absence of contact unusual.
  - i. These calls may be handled as an attempt to contact or an attempt to locate.
  - ii. Attempts will be made to contact the missing person if the person is believed to be at a location in the City, and, if contact is made, the missing person will be asked to contact the complainant.
  - iii. While attempting to make contact, the responding officer will be alert to any signs of foul play. If no contact is made, a message may be left for the missing person to contact the complainant.
  - iv. The Department may advise the complainant that contact was made with the missing person and the message was relayed, but may not provide the address of, or contact information for, the missing person unless that person consents to such.
- d. A missing person report should be made by a relative or legal guardian. If, however, a relative or guardian is not immediately available, then the report may be taken from a person who is a close friend, an employer or co-worker, or someone who has temporary custody of the missing person or a legitimate interest in the missing person’s safety. Care should be taken to ensure the report of a missing person is not an attempt to locate the person for civil or other personal reasons on behalf of the complainant.
- e. A missing person report may be taken from a complainant who is out of the area and unable to make the report in person. In these cases, the reporting officer shall request the complainant to send the following information to the Department as soon as possible:
  - i. A written, signed account of the details of why the person is being reported missing, the complainant’s relationship with the missing person, and why the complainant believes the person is missing under unusual circumstances.
  - ii. A recent photograph of the missing person.
- f. The officer taking the initial report of a missing person will be responsible for obtaining and including the following information, as available, in the report:
  - i. Details on why the person is being reported missing, including why the complainant believes the person is missing under unusual or suspicious circumstances.
  - ii. The complete name of the missing person and any aliases, maiden names, other names used, etc.
  - iii. The missing person’s date of birth and any alias dates of birth.
  - iv. The missing person’s social security number, if known.
  - v. The city, county and state of birth for the missing person.
  - vi. A complete physical description of the missing person, to include any oddities, scars, marks, tattoos, etc.
  - vii. A complete description of what the missing person was wearing.
  - viii. A description of jewelry or other items that the missing person was wearing or usually wears.
  - ix. Any type and numbers of identification the missing person would be carrying or would be aware of, e.g., driver’s license, credit cards, debit cards.

- x. The last known address and telephone number, including cellular phone numbers, of the missing person and any addresses or locations he/she is known to frequent.
- xi. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of friends and family of the missing person.
- xii. Vehicles that the missing person owns, drives, or has access to and other modes of transportation used by the missing person.
- xiii. Name and address of the missing person's place of employment or school.
- xiv. The location, date and time where the person was last seen and by whom and the last known mode and direction of travel if known.
- xv. Any hobbies, habits or activities of the missing person.
- xvi. Any suspicious or unusual circumstances in the case.
- xvii. Any doctors, hospitals or dentists who may have medical records, including dental records, on the missing person.
- xviii. If and where fingerprints of the missing person are available.
- xix. If the person was missing previously, the previous case numbers and the location of recovery, if known.
- xx. Any available documentation if the complainant is reporting the person missing as incompetent, court ordered to a facility, etc.
- xxi. Complete information on the complainant, to include name, address, phone numbers, date of birth, and relationship to the missing person. If the complainant does not have a phone, the report should include the name and phone number of a friend or family member who can contact the complainant.
- g. The reporting officer will attempt to obtain a current photograph of the missing person. The photograph should have the missing person's name and the case number written on the back and will be submitted with the report. This photograph may be entered into NCIC/FCIC by Communications.
- h. The reporting officer will ensure that the missing person is entered into NCIC/FCIC when the person is missing under circumstances that indicate the person may be endangered, missing involuntarily, disabled, or a catastrophe or accident victim and will ensure that a BOLO is sent out to the appropriate areas. All missing children will be entered in NCIC/FCIC.
  - i. In all cases, the reporting officer should get a signed written statement from the reporting person to support the entry of the missing person into NCIC/FCIC. If the reporting person refuses to provide such a statement, the officer will explain how this may severely limit any attempt to notify other law enforcement agencies concerning the missing person. Any refusal will be documented in the report narrative.
  - ii. The statement should include a description of the details of why the person is being reported missing, including why the reporting party believes the person is missing under unusual or suspicious circumstances.
  - iii. Per F.S.S. 937.021, the missing person must be entered into NCIC/FCIC within two hours of completion of the missing person report.
- i. In all cases, the reporting officer will provide the complainant with the case number and advise them to contact the Department immediately if they hear from the missing person or the missing person returns.
- j. If, at the time the initial report is taken, a missing adult appears to be the victim of an abduction or foul play, a Sergeant will respond and the Detective Sergeant will be notified and have a Detective(s) and, if needed, crime scene investigator(s) respond to the scene to assist with the investigation. The responding officer(s) will secure and safeguard the area as a potential crime scene.
  - i. In the case of a kidnapping, the FBI may be requested to assist.
- k. If, at the time the initial report is taken, it appears a missing adult is mentally diminished, developmentally disabled, emotionally disturbed, drug dependent or otherwise in imminent danger, a Sergeant will respond to the scene. An expanded investigation, including the use of all appropriate internal and external resources, will commence immediately. Steps to take may include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Conducting an area search.
  - ii. Requesting the assistance of Detectives and other Department members.

- iii. Use of K-9's for searching.
- iv. Notification to the media for public assistance locating the person.
- v. Utilization of the Dialogic and the community notification system provided by ACIM (see section 5 below).
- vi. Utilization of the PBSO helicopter for a search.
- vii. Requesting assistance from community organizations such as local Alzheimer support groups.
- 1. The Detective Sergeant will review all missing person reports. The assigned Detective will be responsible for the following:
  - i. Responding to the scene if the missing person appears to be a victim of abduction or foul play and obtaining a briefing from the first responder(s) and other on-scene personnel.
  - ii. Reviewing all reports and forms completed by the first responders.
  - iii. Verifying the descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
  - iv. Conducting a neighborhood canvas or investigation to locate persons who may have information on the incident.
  - v. Obtaining a recent history of the missing person.
  - vi. Investigating any conflicting information received from family members, witnesses, and other individuals.
  - vii. Reviewing and evaluating all available information and evidence collected.
  - viii. Developing and implementing an investigative plan for follow-up to include a documented monthly review of each case and determining whether the case should be maintained in the NCIC/FCIC database.
  - ix. Identifying and obtaining any needed additional resources and specialized services.
  - x. Updating and reviewing descriptive and other information for dissemination.
  - xi. Obtaining fingerprints and requesting written consent for dental records, as available, of the missing person and entering those records into the NCIC Dental File when the missing person has not been located within 30 days of the initial report.
  - xii. Obtaining or attempting to obtain and submit specimens for DNA analysis from the missing person (child or adult) or from an appropriate family member when the missing person has not been located within 90 days.
  - xiii. Maintaining regular contact with the complainant and other relevant persons.

## **2. ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES FOR MISSING CHILDREN**

- a. All reports of missing children, including suspected runaways, will be thoroughly and promptly investigated by this Department.
- b. Jurisdictional conflicts are to be avoided when a child is reported missing. If a missing child was last seen in the city, this Department will immediately initiate the required reporting process. If a child resides in the city and was last seen in another jurisdiction, but the law enforcement agency covering that jurisdiction chooses not to take a missing child report, this Department will assume reporting and investigative responsibility. Even when the report is taken in another jurisdiction, this Department will provide any requested assistance to that agency.
- c. The report should be made by a parent or legal guardian. If, however, a parent or guardian is not immediately available, then the report may be taken from a person who has temporary custody of the missing person and a legitimate interest in the missing person's safety, such as school authorities, but the child's parent/guardian should be contacted as soon as possible. Care should be taken to ensure the report of a missing child is not an illegitimate attempt to locate the child for a custody dispute or other personal reasons on behalf of the complainant.
- d. Upon the receipt of a report of a missing child, the Communications Center will take the following steps:
  - i. Immediately dispatch an officer to meet with the complainant.
  - ii. Notify the shift Sergeant that the circumstances indicate the child is lost or missing under unusual circumstances.

- iii. If the child is believed to be lost or in danger, obtain and transmit to on-duty units an initial description of the missing child, last known location, direction of travel and possible destination if known.
- iv. Search CAD records for related information.
- v. Make any notifications requested by the on-scene Sergeant, e.g., Detectives, PIO, Command Staff, etc.
- vi. Upon receipt of the needed information from the responding officer, issue a BOLO to all on-duty officers via radio broadcast, transmit a county wide BOLO (or wider area if appropriate) via teletype, and enter the child in NCIC/FCIC using the applicable Special Interest Codes.
- vii. At the direction of the Sergeant in charge of the investigation, initiate telephone notifications to the community using the Dialogic system.
- viii. Provide any other support assistance requested by responding or investigating officers.
- ix. ECO Supervisors should, within two hours of the call, review the call handling to ensure critical information was not missed or is listed incorrectly. The Communications Manager or their Assistant will review it on the next business day. Such reviews will be documented on the Checklist for Public Safety Telecommunicators.
- e. The first responding officer(s) shall take the following steps:
  - i. Respond promptly to the scene.
  - ii. Interview parents or person making initial report.
  - iii. Verify that the child is in fact missing.
  - iv. Verify the child's custody status.
  - v. Identify the circumstances of the disappearance.
  - vi. Notify the shift Sergeant if the child is missing under unusual circumstances.
  - vii. Determine when, where, and by whom the child was last seen.
  - viii. Interview the individuals who last had contact with the child.(separately)
  - ix. Identify the child's zone of safety for his/her age and development status.
  - x. Based on the available information, make an initial determination of the type of incident, e.g., non-family abduction, family abduction, runaway, endangered runaway, or lost, injured or otherwise missing.
  - xi. Obtain a detailed description of the missing child, suspected abductor(s) (if applicable), and any vehicles used and other pertinent information.
  - xii. Provide detailed descriptive information to communications for BOLO updates.
  - xiii. Request additional personnel if required, e.g., for area searches, etc.
  - xiv. Request investigative assistance if necessary.
  - xv. Brief all additional responding personnel, including Sergeants and detectives.
  - xvi. Ensure everyone at the scene is identified and interviewed separately.
  - xvii. Continue to keep Communications informed of all appropriate developing information for broadcast updates.
  - xviii. Secure and safeguard the area as a potential crime scene when appropriate. Seal/protect scene and area of child's home (including child's personal items such as hairbrush, diary, photographs, and items with the child's fingerprints/footprints/tooth impressions) so that evidence is not destroyed and to ensure items which could help in the search for and/or to identify the child are preserved.
  - xix. Conduct a thorough search of the scene, surrounding areas, and of the missing child's home, even if the child was reported missing from a different location. If appropriate, written consent should be obtained for residences, outbuildings, vehicles, etc. Search assistance can be obtained from the K-9 unit, PBSO helicopter, other agencies, etc.
  - xx. Evaluate contents and appearance of child's room/residence.
  - xxi. Record if the child has or had access to an on-line computer, cellular phone, or pager.
  - xxii. Obtain photographs/videotapes of the missing child (and abductor, if available).

- xxiii. Ensure the information regarding the missing child is entered into NCIC/FCIC and that any information on a suspected abductor is also entered. For juveniles, the city, county and state of birth must be included for the NCIC/FCIC entry.
- xxiv. Prepare all necessary reports and forms in a timely manner, including the information specified in Section 1-f.
- xxv. Provide the parent/guardian of the child with a Missing Child Reporting Form for submission to the FDLE Missing Child Information Clearinghouse (MCIC). The submission of this form by the parent/guardian serves as a backup for the information submitted by the Department via FCIC but does not relieve the Department of the obligation to submit that information.
- xxvi. Recommend that the parent/guardian assist in the investigation by alerting friends and relatives of the missing child and the school the child attends.
- xxvii. In all cases, the reporting officer will provide the complainant with the case number and advise them to contact the Department immediately if they hear from the missing person or the missing person returns.
- f. The Sergeant who is responsible for the call shall take the following steps:
  - i. Respond to all children missing under unusual circumstances calls.
  - ii. Obtain a briefing from the first responder(s) and other Department responders at the scene.
  - iii. Determine if additional personnel are needed to assist with the investigation/search.
  - iv. Determine if outside assistance or external resources are necessary.
  - v. Ensure all required resources, equipment and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested and expedite their availability.
  - vi. Establish a command post if there is a crime scene to process or if there will be a search of the area. The Command Post should not be at the victim's home.
  - vii. Organize and coordinate any search efforts.
  - viii. Ensure coordination/cooperation among all personnel involved in the investigation and search efforts.
  - ix. Ensure that all required notifications have been made.
  - x. Establish a liaison with the victim's family.
  - xi. Confirm that all Department policies and procedures regarding missing persons are followed.
  - xii. Utilize the media as appropriate to assist in the search for the missing child. Manage media relations or request the response of the PIO.
- g. The Investigations Bureau will conduct follow-up investigations on all missing child reports. If, at the time the initial report is taken, the missing child appears to be the victim of an abduction, foul play, or sexual exploitation, the Detective Sergeant will be notified and have investigator(s) and, if needed, crime scene investigator(s) respond to the scene to assist with the investigation.
  - i. If the child appears to be lost, the Investigations Bureau may be requested to assist with a search.
- h. The assigned detective will be responsible for the following:
  - i. Responding to the scene when requested and obtaining a briefing from the first responder(s) and other on-scene personnel.
  - ii. Reviewing all reports and forms completed by the first responders.
  - iii. Verifying the descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
  - iv. Conducting a neighborhood canvas or investigation to locate persons who may have information on the incident.
  - v. Obtaining a recent history of family dynamics.
  - vi. Investigating any conflicting information received from family members, witnesses, and other individuals.
  - vii. Reviewing and evaluating all available information and evidence collected.
  - viii. Developing and implementing an investigative plan for follow-up and conducting a thorough investigation.
  - ix. Identifying and obtaining any needed additional resources and specialized services.
  - x. Updating and reviewing descriptive and other information for dissemination.

- xi. Obtaining dental records of the missing child and entering those records into NCIC/FCIC if the child has not been located for 30 days.
- xii. Maintaining regular contact with the complainant and other relevant persons.
- i. If it is determined that a child is missing under unusual circumstances (see glossary), an expanded investigation, including the use of all appropriate internal and external resources, will commence immediately. External resources may include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Activation of the Amber Alert System (see Section 7 below).
  - ii. Utilization of Dialogic.
  - iii. Utilization of the community notification system provided by ACIM, (see Section 8 below).
  - iv. Assistance provided by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), including the Child Locator Computer System.
  - v. The Communications Center will have contact information and instructions for the above resources.
  - vi. In the case of a kidnapping, the FBI may be requested to assist.

### **3. SEARCHES FOR MISSING/LOST PERSONS**

- a. A physical search will be conducted whenever a lost/missing child or an endangered missing adult is believed to be in the local area or whenever there is no indication that the person has left the immediate area.
- b. The initial search should focus on the area where the person was last seen. The residence and the immediate area surrounding the residence of the missing person, if local, should be searched, even if the complainant has already checked those areas. The search of the residence should include closets, under beds, storage areas, etc.
- c. If the initial search is unsuccessful, the search area should be expanded to a one mile radius around the last point of contact with the missing person.
- d. If the person was operating a motor vehicle, and the vehicle is located, the search should be conducted within a one mile radius of where the vehicle was found.
- e. Other areas to be searched include unpopulated areas, fields, woods, ditches, waterways and brush areas.
- f. If the person is lost in a shopping mall or other large structure or business, assistance should be obtained from security officers or employees of the business who are familiar with the layout of the building(s).
- g. The Sergeant in charge of the search may request additional resources as needed. These resources may include K-9 units, additional personnel, air support (helicopter), and assistance from other agencies.
- h. The Sergeant in charge of the search may also utilize Dialogic and/or ACIM organization to notify the community of the missing person.
- i. The media may also be requested to assist by publishing/broadcasting information on the missing person.

### **4. CRIMINAL ABDUCTIONS**

- a. In the event of an abduction case, the following steps should be taken by the responding officer in addition to the other procedures listed above:
  - i. Immediately notify the shift Sergeant, whom will notify the Bureau Major.
  - ii. Obtain descriptions of the victim, suspect and any vehicles involved and direction of travel. Have Communications issue a BOLO to Department units, Palm Beach County law enforcement agencies, and any other applicable areas.
  - iii. For a child victim, activate the Amber Alert (see section 7 below).

### **5. PARENTAL ABDUCTION**

- a. Parental abduction is a crime and should be investigated as such. Relevant statutes are 787.03 and 787.04. Due to the complexities of custody disputes, the investigating officer should confer with a Sergeant regarding the course of action to take. If needed, the State Attorney's Office can also be contacted.

- b. Any relevant documents regarding the custody of the child should be reviewed and verified. If the custody papers are from out of state, it may be necessary to refer the reporting parent to the court to have the documents certified or registered in Palm Beach County. The reporting parent should be referred to their attorney for this.
- c. The same procedures used in any missing child case shall be followed in the case of a parental abduction.
- d. All possible attempts to contact the abducting parent should be made to verify the child's presence with that parent and the child's well-being.
- e. If there is information indicating the child may be endangered as a result of the abducting parent's actions, the investigating officer or detective will call the DCF abuse hotline to report the incident.
- f. If there is probable cause to believe a crime has been committed, the investigating officer or detective should attempt to obtain a warrant for the arrest of the abducting parent. If a warrant is issued, the investigating officer will ensure the warrant is listed in NCIC/FCIC.
- g. If it is believed the abducting parent and child have left the state, the FBI may be contacted for assistance. Depending on the circumstances, the FBI may be able to obtain a warrant for Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution (UFAP) for the abducting parent.
- h. If it is believed the abducting parent and the child have left the country, the U.S. State Department and Interpol may be contacted for assistance.
- i. The Amber Alert system (see below) may be used in the case of a parental abduction if there is an indication the child is in danger.

## **6. RUNAWAYS**

- a. The procedures of Section 2 will be followed in the case of runaways with the exception of those procedures that by their nature do not apply.
- b. Officers taking a missing person report on a runaway shall be alert for signs or indications of mental, physical or sexual abuse, foul play, etc.
- c. The responding officer should seize for evidence any notes, messages, etc. left by the child.
- d. Runaways shall be entered into NCIC/FCIC as soon as possible using the Special Interest Code for runaway. A local and Palm Beach County BOLO shall also be issued.
- e. The NCIC/FCIC entry shall remain active until the child's location and welfare are ascertained and verified.

## **7. AMBER ALERTS FOR MISSING CHILDREN: 1-888-356-4774**

- a. The Florida Amber Plan is a program designed to broadcast critical information regarding a missing/abducted child believed to be in danger, using the Emergency Alert System, Dynamic Message Signs, FCIC BOLO's, media alerts, lottery machines, the Internet and other methods. In order for the alert to be activated, the following five criteria must be met:
  - i. The child must be under eighteen years of age.
  - ii. There must be a clear indication of abduction.
  - iii. If not a clear abduction, the Department's investigation must conclude that the child's life is in danger.
  - iv. There must be a detailed description of the child and/or abductor/vehicle to broadcast to the public. A photograph of the child should be emailed to the MCIC as soon as available.
  - v. The activation must be recommended by the Department.
- b. The investigating officer, in consultation with the responsible Sergeant, is responsible for the initiation of an Amber Alert.
- c. The Amber Alert is issued by contacting the MCIC, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to request activation.
  - i. A 4-way call will be conducted to include the Department's lead investigating officer, the on-call FDLE Special Agent Sergeant (SAS), the on-call MCIC analyst, and a Statewide Analyst.
  - ii. The FDLE SAS, working in conjunction with the lead investigator, will determine what information will be broadcast and what areas will be targeted for dissemination.



- d. Prior to contacting MCIC, and before an Amber Alert can be activated, there must have been a sufficient preliminary investigation to be able to answer a series of questions. A worksheet containing these questions is attached as an appendix to this policy.
- e. Once the child is located, the Amber Alert must be cancelled.

#### **8. A CHILD IS MISSING PROGRAM (ACIM): 1-888-875-2246**

- a. ACIM is an organization that provides community notifications of missing children, as well as missing elderly persons, missing persons with Alzheimer's, and missing disabled persons. ACIM uses a rapid response telephone system, similar to Dialogic, to provide alerts to the community via telephone.
- b. ACIM may be utilized when the missing person is a child, a senior citizen (65 or older), or a disabled person.
- c. When a decision is made to use ACIM, the investigating officer will contact ACIM to provide the information on the missing person and begin the process. A phone number must be supplied to ACIM for the public to contact the Department with information about the missing person.
- d. When ACIM has been utilized, and the missing person is located, ACIM must be notified.

#### **9. SILVER ALERT**

- a. The Statewide Silver Alert is a plan to aid local law enforcement in the rescue or recovery of a missing elderly person who suffers from irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties. The Silver Alert Plan recognizes that the most effective response to a missing senior citizen leverages community resources for the search to augment the investigative response by the local law enforcement agency. The Plan further acknowledges Silver Alerts should be activated through the investigating local law enforcement agency which is in the best position to notify the media and disseminate the information through avenues such as neighborhood telephone alerts and other technologies the agency may have to communicate with its citizens.
- b. A Statewide Silver Alert is issued by the FDLE MEPIC.
- c. A Department Sergeant must authorize the request for activation of the Silver Alert Plan.
- d. The Silver Alert Plan should be activated if the following criteria are met:
  - i. The missing person is 60 years of age or older.
  - ii. There is a clear indication that the individual has an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (i.e., dementia). This must be verified by law enforcement.
  - iii. Under extraordinary circumstances when a person age 18 to 59 has irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties and law enforcement has determined the missing person lacks the capacity to consent and that the use of dynamic message signs may be the only possible way to rescue the missing person.
- e. The following criteria must be met for use of the FDOT/FHP/FDLE dynamic message signs:
  - i. The Department has already notified local media of the missing person.
  - ii. The investigation must show that the disappearance poses a credible threat to the missing person's welfare and safety.
  - iii. There must be a description of a vehicle and a tag number to display on the dynamic message boards.
  - iv. The investigating officer must verify the vehicle and tag information.
  - v. The missing person must have been entered into NCIC/FCIC.
  - vi. The Department must have issued a statewide BOLO for the missing person.
- f. The following procedures are to be used for missing persons that meet the criteria for a Silver Alert.
  - i. Initial response for a missing person call will be in accordance with the other sections of this policy and procedure.
  - ii. Upon determining the case may meet the criteria for a Silver Alert, the responding officer will notify a Sergeant, and the Sergeant will respond to the scene.

- iii. The Silver Alert Plan should be activated as soon as possible after it is determined that the above criteria have been met and when an immediate search of the area has failed to locate the individual and it is believed the activation of the alert through media and other local resources would aid in the safe recovery of the individual.
- iv. The officer will ensure the missing person is entered in NCIC/FCIC and a statewide BOLO is issued.
- v. The Sergeant will notify the PIO to prepare and distribute a press release regarding the missing person. The investigating officer will obtain a photograph of the missing person, if one is available, and provide the photograph and other necessary information to the PIO for distribution. The distribution of the press release, and photo if available, will include the normal local dissemination as well as the statewide Media Alert System.
- vi. The Sergeant will ensure local community notifications are made via the Dialogic system and/or by contacting ACIM at 1-888-875-2246.
- vii. The investigating officer will determine if a vehicle is involved. If so, the officer will confirm vehicle and tag information.
- viii. The Sergeant or investigating officer will contact the FDLE MEPIC at 1-888-356-4774. The person making the call must be prepared to provide the following information:
  - 1. Name, date of birth, and other identifying information on the missing person; the circumstances under which the person is missing; and verification the person has an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (i.e., dementia).
  - 2. Confirmation that a local or regional alert has been issued via media notification and distribution of a BOLO.
  - 3. That the person has been entered into NCIC/FCIC as missing.
  - 4. That the investigation has concluded that the missing person's disappearance poses a credible threat to the person's welfare and safety.
  - 5. If a vehicle is involved, confirmed and verified vehicle and tag information.
- ix. The Department will continue with the missing person's investigation as described in this policy and procedure.
- x. When a missing person is located, the FDLE MEPIC must be notified. The person responsible for the investigation at that point, whether the initial responding officer or an investigator assigned later, will ensure this notification is made and will ensure the PIO is advised. The PIO will ensure notification that the person was located is sent to Media Alert and local media outlets.

## **10. PROJECT LIFESAVER**

- a. Project Lifesaver is a program for locating missing persons suffering from issues such as Alzheimer's, Down syndrome and autism, where such persons may have a tendency to wander off and become lost. This program utilizes electronic ID bracelets provided to the patients and electronic tracking equipment the Department has obtained. Each ID bracelet transmits a tracking signal on a unique frequency.
- b. Upon taking a call of a missing person who is wearing a Project Lifesaver bracelet, Communications will notify the appropriate patrol Sergeant. The patrol Sergeant will obtain the tracking equipment from the EDC and respond to the missing person's last known location. An officer trained in the use of the equipment will then be assigned to operate the equipment.
- c. Communications will log into the Project Lifesaver website to obtain the unique frequency for that person's bracelet. That frequency will then be provided to the Sergeant and the responding officer who will be operating the tracking equipment.
- d. Upon arrival at the last known location of the missing person, the Sergeant will evaluate if the circumstances are appropriate for use of the tracking equipment.
- e. Upon making a decision to use the tracking equipment, the Sergeant will have communications request additional tracking units from Jupiter Police Department and/or the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office.

The tracking equipment works best when triangulating on a signal, so two additional units are recommended for a total of three tracking devices.

- f. The responding Sergeant will serve as the incident commander, coordinating the efforts and communication between the PBGPD units and other agency units providing assistance. This can best be accomplished by assigning a PBGPD officer to accompany the personnel from other agencies.
- g. If no signal is received at the last known location of the missing person, the officer(s) will begin an expanding radius search in an attempt to locate the tracking signal, in accordance with the training provided on the operation of the equipment.
- h. If a signal is located at the last known location of the missing person, or as a result of the radius search, the signal will be tracked in accordance with the training provided for the operation of the equipment.
- i. It should be noted that some of these persons may have wandered off before, and may have established a pattern for where they go. The missing person's caregiver should be interviewed to determine if that is the case. If so, and if there is no signal where the missing person was last seen, the area the missing person has gone to before and the route to that area should be checked.

## **11. RECOVERED MISSING PERSONS**

- a. Once a missing person is recovered, and the recovery has been verified, all NCIC/FCIC entries, Amber Alerts, and other notifications shall be cancelled. Cancellation is the responsibility of the agency making the entries.
- b. The cancellation of a missing person entry will not occur until the Department verifies that the missing person has actually been located.
- c. When a missing adult is located or returns, the officer assigned to handle the recovery shall:
  - i. Verify that the person is, in fact, the person reported missing. For a missing adult located in the City, verification shall include personal contact by an officer with the missing person to verify his/her status and well-being. For a missing adult located in another jurisdiction, verification may consist of a teletype from the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over where the person is located or other verified contact with the missing adult. The Department will comply with any request of a competent adult to not divulge his/her whereabouts.
  - ii. Arrange for follow-up investigation, if needed, to include medical examinations, etc.
  - iii. Complete the appropriate supplemental reports.
- d. When a missing child is recovered or returns, the officer assigned to handle the recovery shall:
  - i. Verify that the returned child is, in fact, the child reported missing. When the recovery occurs in the city, verification shall include personal contact by an officer with the missing child to verify his/her status and safety. For a missing child located in another jurisdiction, verification should consist of a teletype from the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over where the person is located, followed by personal contact when the child returns home.
  - ii. Arrange for follow-up investigation and intervention services, if needed, for example, mental and/or physical health examinations, counseling, etc., depending on the circumstances.
  - iii. Complete the appropriate supplemental reports.
- e. If the recovered missing person is an adult unable to care for himself/herself, the officer shall maintain custody of the person until he/she is turned over to a responsible party (family member, caretaker, hospital, DCF, etc.). The recovered missing person shall not be held in any type of secure detention absent criminal charges.
- f. If the recovered missing person is a child, the officer shall maintain custody of the child until he/she is turned over to an appropriate party (parent/guardian, DCF, etc.). A recovered missing child shall not be held in any type of secure detention absent criminal charges.

## **12. MISSING PERSONS REPORTED BY OTHER AGENCIES**

- a. This Department will assist other agencies in the search for a missing person when requested.

- b. An officer who locates a missing person from another jurisdiction shall ensure the other agency is notified and shall document the recovery in a report. The located missing person, adult or child, should be interviewed away from any bystanders, friends, family members, or other persons, so as to allow the missing person the freedom to report any coercion or other unusual circumstances.
- c. If the recovered missing person is a competent adult, and does not want his/her location revealed, the Department will comply with that request. The request will be documented in the report. The originating agency will be notified of the recovery via telephone or teletype regarding the recovery, and will be advised the person does not wish his/her whereabouts to be divulged.
- d. If the recovered missing person is an adult unable to care for himself/herself, the officer shall maintain custody of the person until he/she is turned over to a responsible party (family member, caretaker, hospital, DCF, etc). The recovered missing person shall not be held in any type of secure detention absent criminal charges.
- e. If the recovered missing person is a child, the officer shall maintain custody of the child until he/she is turned over to an appropriate party (parent/guardian, DCF, etc.). A recovered missing child shall not be held in any type of secure detention absent criminal charges.

### 13. UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS

- a. Whenever an unidentified deceased person, or a living person unable to identify himself/herself due to injury, mental infirmity, age, etc. is found in the City, the investigating officer or detective will be responsible to:
  - i. Obtain as complete and detailed description of the person as possible.
  - ii. Ensure the person's description is entered in the NCIC Unidentified Person File. This file is compared daily with the contents of the NCIC Missing Persons File.
  - iii. Utilize all available resources and investigative tools to aid in the identification of the person. In addition to Department resources, assistance may be obtained from outside organizations such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the Alzheimer's Crisis Response Service at Alzheimer's Community Care, etc.
  - iv. Cancel all notifications and entries after identification is made and confirmed.

### 14. GLOSSARY

**Adult:** Any person 18 years of age or older.

**Catastrophe/Accident Victim:** A person missing as a direct result of a disaster.

**Child:** A person under 18 years of age.

**Disabled:** A person who has a physical or mental disability, senility, Alzheimer's, etc. that prevents the person from properly caring for his/her safety.

**Endangered:** A person who is suicidal, in need of medication, has a medical condition which requires immediate care, or is otherwise missing under circumstances that indicate his/her personal safety is in jeopardy.

**Missing Child:** A person less than 18 years of age whose location is unknown and who has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency.

**Runaway:** A non-married, non-emancipated person under 18 years of age who intentionally leaves his/her place of residence without the consent of his/her parent or guardian in order to be free of control or restraint.

**Special Interest Codes:** Codes that are entered into NCIC/FCIC by Communications. These codes will alert officers who come in contact with the person of the status of that person, e.g., runaway, endangered, involuntary, etc. They also provide additional information about the person such as armed and dangerous, suicidal, medical conditions, etc.

**Unusual Circumstances:** refers to a missing person who is:

- Thirteen years of age or younger (children of this age have not established independence from parental control and do not have the survival skills necessary to protect themselves from exploitation), or

- Believed to be one or more of the following:
  - Out of the zone of safety for his/her age and development stage (the zone of safety will vary depending on the age of the person and his/her developmental stage. In the case of an infant, for example, the zone of safety will include the presence of an adult custodian, or the crib, stroller, or carriage in which the infant was placed. For a school age child, the zone of safety might be the immediate neighborhood or the route taken to and from school).
  - Mentally diminished, developmentally disabled, or emotionally disturbed.
  - Drug dependent, including both prescription and illicit substances. Includes persons who need recurring medication for diseases such as diabetes, epilepsy, etc.
  - A potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation. This risk can be assumed if the investigation reveals a possible abduction, violence at the scene, or signs of sexual abuse.
  - Endangered.
  - In a life threatening situation.

---

**INDEX AS:**

- MISSING PERSON
- MISSING CHILD
- AMBER ALERT
- SILVER ALERT

**RESPONSIBILITY INDEX:**

- OFFICERS
- COMMUNICATIONS
- INVESTIGATIONS BUREAU
- SERGEANTS

DRAFTED: SDD 02-04-14    FILED: 4.1.2.21.pdf

---

**APPROVED:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen J. Stepp  
Chief of Police

02/04/14  
Date

### **Florida Amber Criteria**

The following five (5) criteria must be present.

1. The child must be under 18 years of age.
2. There must be a clear indication of an abduction.
3. The local law enforcement agency's investigation must conclude that the child's life is in danger.
4. There must be a detailed description of the child and/or the abductor/vehicle to broadcast to the public. (A photograph of the child should be emailed to the on-call MCIC analyst as soon as possible.)
5. The activation must be recommended by the local law enforcement agency of jurisdiction.

*NOTE: An Amber alert is not to be used for Runaways.*

### **Steps for Activation**

- The local law enforcement agency will contact the MCIC (24 hrs, 7 days a week) at 1-888-356-4774 to request activation.
- A 4-way call will be conducted to include local law enforcement, the on-call FDLE Special Agent Sergeant (SAS), the on-call MCIC Analyst, and a Florida Investigative Support Center Analyst (if after hours).
- The FDLE SAS, working in conjunction with the local law enforcement agency, will determine what information will be broadcast and the areas (Interstate, Statewide, and Regional) to be targeted for dissemination. \*\*When an Amber alert is authorized and the decision is made to disseminate Statewide, the SAS on-call must justify the reason for the statewide activation, such as, law enforcement believes that subject has fled the area of abduction.
- The FDLE SAS will determine if the Dynamic Message Signs are to be used and where information is to be posted (signs are used only when there is sufficient vehicle description, including tag number or good partial tag number).
- The Department of Lottery Light Emitting Diodes (LED) message will be activated when there is a vehicle involved. This message will carry the same information as what is used on the Dynamic Message Signs. A Ticket Message is disseminated in all Amber activation.

*\*\*This is at the request of broadcasters.*

### **The following questions must be answered by the local law enforcement before an Amber alert can be activated**

1. Has the investigation established that the child has been abducted?
2. Was it a witnessed abduction? If so, by who?
3. In the case of family abduction, was there a weapon or violence involved in the taking of the child? (If no weapon or violence is involved, an Amber alert will not be activated.)
4. Has the child's home/room been searched? (Must be conducted prior to Amber activation, even if child disappeared from some place other than home.)
5. Have the contents and appearance of the child's room and home been evaluated?  
(Must be conducted prior to Amber activation, even if child disappeared from some place other than home.)
6. Has the neighborhood been searched? (Must be conducted prior to Amber activation.)

7. How long has the child been missing? (Time delays in reporting a child may negatively impact the usefulness of an Amber alert. However, other facts such as a new lead placing the child and/or abductor in a particular area should also be considered.)
8. When was the child reported missing to law enforcement? (If there is a delay in reporting the child missing local law enforcement needs to determine why.)
9. Has a detailed description of child, clothes, abductor, vehicle been obtained?
10. Has a photo been obtained? Can it be emailed to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse?
11. Have friends and acquaintances been interviewed? (Has this produced any leads?)
12. Has it been determined whether or not the child has ever run away before? (This may help in determining if the current facts suggest a runaway episode.)
13. Are there any special needs or concerns, i.e., medical, mental, or physical disabilities? (This may suggest a need for an Amber or a Missing Child alert.)
14. What search methods have been implemented, e.g., helicopters, boats, dogs, search of homes? (A preliminary search must be conducted of home, school and neighborhood before activation.)
15. Does the child have access to computers/chat rooms? If so, has the local agency checked to see if the child has been communicating with someone who may have lured the child away?
16. Has the child been entered into FCIC as “Endangered” missing? (This is a prerequisite before Amber alert is activated.)
17. Have FCIC Bolo’s been relayed locally, statewide, and nationwide?
18. Has the local media been contacted? (Even if an alert is not activated, local law enforcement should be advised to contact local media.)
19. Is there an assigned local spokesperson to handle media inquiries? (The local law enforcement should expect numerous media inquiries.)
20. Does the local agency have the personnel to gather leads that may accompany an Amber alert?
21. Has the local FBI office been contacted?
22. Has a warrant been obtained on the abductor, if the abductor is known?
23. Has “A Child Is Missing Inc.” been contacted to activate a reverse 911 recording?

*Once an Amber activation has been authorized, the name and telephone number of the lead investigator and the 24/7 telephone number for the local law enforcement agency are to be obtained by the MCIC Analyst. The request is to be made that a digital photo of the child/abductor be sent to the on-call MCIC Analyst via email.*