

Response to Reports of Missing, Runaway and Endangered Persons

441.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

It is the policy of the Office to establish guidelines and responsibilities for the consistent response to, and investigation of, all reports of missing and endangered persons as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter [299C.52](#), subd. 1(c) and (e) ("Minnesota Missing Children and Endangered Persons' Program").

This policy addresses investigations where the person has been determined to be both missing and/or endangered.

The Office recognizes that there is a critical need for immediate and consistent response to reports of missing and endangered persons. The decisions made and actions taken during the preliminary stages have a profound effect on the outcome of the case. Therefore, this agency has established the following responsibilities and guidelines for the investigation of missing and endangered persons. All peace officers, employed by this agency, will be informed of and comply with the procedures contained in this Policy.

441.1.1 DEFINITIONS

- (a) Missing: "The status of a person after a law enforcement agency has received a report of a missing person, has conducted a preliminary investigation, and determined that the person cannot be located" (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter [299C.52](#), subd. 1 (c)).
- (b) Endangered: "A law enforcement official has recorded sufficient evidence that the missing person is at risk of physical injury or death. The following circumstances indicate that a missing person is at risk of physical injury or death:
 - 1. The person is missing as a result of a confirmed abduction or under circumstances that indicate that the person's disappearance was not voluntary;
 - 2. The person is missing under known dangerous circumstances;
 - 3. The person is missing more than 30 days;
 - 4. The person is under the age of 21;
 - 5. There is evidence the person is in need of medical attention or prescription medication such that it will have a serious adverse effect on the person's health if the person does not receive the needed care or medication;
 - 6. The person does not have a pattern of running away or disappearing;
 - 7. The person is mentally impaired;
 - 8. There is evidence that the person may have been abducted by a noncustodial parent;

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9. The person has been the subject of past threats or acts of violence;
 10. There is evidence the person is lost in the wilderness, backcountry, or outdoors where survival is precarious and immediate and effective investigation and search and rescue efforts are critical;
 11. Any other factor that the law enforcement agency deems to indicate that the person may be at risk of physical injury or death, including a determination by another law enforcement agency that the person is missing and endangered; (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter [299C.52](#), subd. 1 (e)).
- (c) 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."
- (d) Sufficient Evidence: Facts and circumstance which would induce a reasonably prudent peace officer to believe that a crime has been or is about to be committed.
- (e) NCIC: The National Crime Information Center
- (f) CJIS: The Criminal Justice Information System
- (g) DNA: Deoxyribonucleic acid from a human biological specimen (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter [299C.52](#) subd. 1(f)),
- (h) Amber Plan: A collaboration between law enforcement and local broadcasters through the use of an early warning system to alert the public when a child is in danger as a result of abduction.
- (i) Locator: A computerized system to assist in rapidly disseminating information to other law enforcement agencies and the public regarding a runaway/missing youth.

441.1.2 PROCEDURES

This agency will respond according to the following six types of general procedures:

- Initial Response
- Initial Investigation
- Investigation
- 30 Day Benchmark
- Prolonged Investigation, and
- Recovery/Case Closure

441.1.3 INITIAL RESPONSE PROCEDURE

- (a) Initial Response Procedures

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1. As required by Minnesota Statutes, Chapter [299C.53](#), subd. 1(a), Law Enforcement shall accept, without delay, any report of a missing person. Law Enforcement shall not refuse to accept a missing person report on the basis that:
 - (a) The missing person is an adult;
 - (b) The circumstances do not indicate foul play;
 - (c) The person has been missing for a short period of time;
 - (d) The person has been missing for a long period of time;
 - (e) There is no indication that the missing person was in the jurisdiction served by the law enforcement agency at the time of the disappearance;
 - (f) The circumstances suggest that the disappearance may be voluntary;
 - (g) The reporting person does not have personal knowledge of the facts;
 - (h) The reporting person cannot provide all of the information requested by the law enforcement agency;
 - (i) The reporting person lacks a familial or other relationship with the missing person, or;
 - (j) For any other reason, except in cases where the law enforcement agency has direct knowledge, that the person is, in fact, not missing, and the whereabouts and welfare of the person are known at the time the report is filed.
2. Dispatch a deputy, to the scene, to conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether the person is missing, and if missing, whether the person is endangered.
3. Obtain interpretive services if necessary.
4. Interview parent(s) or the person, who made the initial report.
5. Determine when, where and by whom the missing person/child was last seen.
6. Interview the individual(s) who last had contact with the person.
7. Obtain a detailed description of the missing person, abductor, vehicles, etc.
8. Contact the 911 Communications Center as soon as possible to have the complete descriptive and critical information entered, regarding the missing and endangered person, into the NCIC Missing Person File - Using the appropriate NCIC Category. Entry must be made no more than two hours from the time the Office is notified of the missing person.
9. Enter complete descriptive information regarding suspects/vehicle in the NCIC system.

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10. Request investigative and supervisory assistance.
11. Update additional responding personnel.
12. Communicate known details on all appropriate communication channels, to other patrol units, other local law enforcement agencies, and surrounding law enforcement agencies. 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.
13. Notify the family of the Minnesota Missing/Unidentified Persons Clearinghouse services available.
14. Secure the crime scene, do not allow individuals to leave the area until interviewed, and attempt to determine if anyone may have left prior to the arrival of law enforcement.
15. Activate protocols for working with the media. (AMBER Alert, Minnesota Crime Alert Network)
16. As required by Minnesota Statutes, Chapter [299C.53](#), subd. 1(b), consult with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension if the person is determined to be an endangered missing person. Request assistance as necessary.
17. Implement multi-jurisdictional coordination/mutual aid plan as necessary; e.g.:
 - (a) When the primary agency has limited resources;
 - (b) When the investigation crosses jurisdictional lines; and
 - (c) When the jurisdictions have pre-established task forces or investigative teams.

441.1.4 INITIAL INVESTIGATION

- (a) Conduct a neighborhood/vehicle canvas.
- (b) Arrange for use of 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, building or other area/location where the incident took place and conduct a search including all surrounding areas. Obtain consent or a search warrant if necessary.
- (f) Assign a detective whose duties will include coordination of the investigation.

441.1.5 INVESTIGATION

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- (a) Begin setting up the Command Post/Operation Base away from the person's residence. Know the specific responsibilities of the Command Post Supervisor, Media Specialist, Search Coordinator, Investigative Coordinator, Communication Officer, Support Unit Coordinator, and two liaison officers (one at the command post and one at the 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 agency 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 of child abuse.
- (f) Review records for previous incidents related to the missing person and prior law enforcement activity in the area, including prowlers, indecent exposure, attempted abductions, etc.
- (g) Obtain the missing person's medical and dental records.
- (h) Create a Missing Persons' Profile, with detailed information, obtained from interviews and records from family and friends, describing the missing person's Health, Relationships, Personality, Problems, Life Experiences, Plans, Equipment, etc.
- (i) Update the NCIC file, as necessary with any additional information, regarding the missing person, suspect(s) and vehicle(s).
- (j) Interview delivery personnel, employees of gas, water, electric and cable companies, taxi drivers, post office personnel, sanitation workers, etc.
- (k) For persons' under the age of 21, contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) for photo dissemination and other case assistance.
- (l) Determine if outside help is needed, and utilize local, state and federal resources related to specialized investigative needs, including:
 - 1. Searches and Available Resources:
 - (a) Ground Searches - personnel, vehicles, and/or mounted patrol/civil air patrol
 - (b) Canine Assisted - tracking, trailing, air scent and human remains detection (HRD) Canines
 - (c) Water and underwater searches - Boats, cameras and sonar
 - (d) Air Searches - Civil Air Patrol and National Guard, helicopters, and fixed wing and UAV.
 - (e) Cave Searches
 - 2. Investigative Resources:
 - (a) Child interviewing
 - (b) Polygraph

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- (c) Profiling/behavioral analysis
 - (d) Minnesota Sex and Violent Crime Analysis programs
 - (e) Crime analysis/computer assistance
 - (f) Forensic artistry/crime scene and evidence processing
 - (g) Memory retrieval
3. Interpretive Services:
- (a) Telephone Services (traps, traces, triangulation, etc).
 - (b) Media Assistance (Local and National).
 - (c) Secure electronic communication information such as the missing person's cell phone number, and social networking site information.
4. **MISSING FOR OVER 30 DAYS** - If the person remains missing after 30 days from entry into NCIC. The local law enforcement agency will be contacted by the BCA Missing and Unidentified Persons Clearinghouse to request the following if not already received:
- (a) DNA samples from family members and, if possible, from the missing person.
 - (b) Dental information and x-rays.
 - (c) Additional photographs and video that may aid the investigation or identification.
 - (d) Fingerprints.
 - (e) Other specific identifying information.
 - (f) This information will be entered into the appropriate databases by BCA Clearinghouse personnel.
 - (g) If the person is still missing after 30 days, change the NCIC classification to endangered.

441.1.6 PROLONGED INVESTIGATION

- (a) Develop a profile on the possible abductor.
- (b) Consider the use of polygraph for the parents, spouse, and other key individuals.
- (c) Re-read all reports and transcripts of interviews, revisit the crime scene, review all photographs, videotapes, CDs, recordings, re-interview key individuals, and re-examine all physical evidence collected.
- (d) Review all potential witness/suspect information obtained in the initial investigation and consider background checks on anyone of interest, identified in the investigation,

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- (e) Periodically check pertinent sources of information about the missing person for any activity, such as phone, bank, internet or credit card activity,
- (f) Develop time-line and other visual exhibits,
- (g) Critique the results of the on-going investigation with appropriate investigative resources,
- (h) Arrange for periodic media coverage.
- (i) Consider utilizing rewards and crime-stoppers programs.
- (j) Update NCIC Missing Person File information, as necessary.
- (k) Re-contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) for age progression assistance.
- (l) Re-contact the family or reporting party on a regular basis, or when appropriate.

441.1.7 RECOVERY/CASE CLOSURE

(a) **Alive**

1. Arrange for a comprehensive physical examination of the victim.
2. Conduct a careful interview of the person, document the results of the interview, and involve all appropriate agencies.
3. Refer family for effective reunification assistance.
4. Cancel alerts (Minnesota Crime Alert, AMBER Alert, etc) and remove case from NCIC and other information systems, and remove posters and other publications from circulation.
5. Perform constructive post-case critique. Re-assess the procedures used and update the office policy and procedures as appropriate.

(b) **Deceased**

1. Contact coroner, medical examiner or anthropologist to arrange for body recovery and examination.
2. Cancel alerts and remove case from NCIC and other information systems, and remove posters and other publications from circulation.
3. Perform constructive post-case critique. Re-assess the procedures used and update the office policy and procedures as appropriate.

441.2 NCIC GUIDELINES

- (a) Juveniles, juveniles are to be entered into the system within 2 hours upon receipt of a missing person report or upon notification that the juvenile is missing. A signed report is not necessary for the immediate entry; however it is required soon after the entry.

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The documentation should be from a source such as a parent, legal guardian, next of kin, physician or other authority source including a neighbor or a friend in unusual circumstances. However when such documentation is not reasonably attainable, a signed report by the investigating deputy will suffice.

- (b) Adults 18-21 Years Old, Any adult under 21 years of age are to be entered into the system within 2 hours upon receipt of a missing person report or upon notification that the young adult is missing. A signed report is not necessary for the immediate entry; however it is required soon after the entry. The documentation should be from a source such as a parent, legal guardian, next of kin, physician or other authority source including a neighbor or a friend in unusual circumstances. However when such documentation is not reasonably attainable, a signed report by the investigating deputy will suffice.
- (c) Adults 21 Years and Older, Adults age 21 and older are required to have signed documentation supporting the stated conditions under which they are being declared missing before entry into the system, unless they are victims of a catastrophe. The documentation should be from a source such as a parent, legal guardian, next of kin, physician or other authority source including a neighbor or a friend in unusual circumstances. However when such documentation is not reasonably attainable, a signed report by the investigating deputy will suffice.
- (d) When using an electronic Records Management System (ERMS), acceptable forms of signatures include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Digitized signatures
 - 2. Manual signatures scanned into the ERMS
 - 3. The case officer's typed name into the report in ERMS
- (e) When entering records into the NCIC missing person file, the entry person will:
 - 1. Check driver licenses files, CCH/III criminal history files and any local files the entering agency might maintain to obtain as many descriptors as possible regarding the subject. This check should include a check of whether dental information is available regarding the subject. (Any descriptors used shall be written somewhere in the officers actual report for Case File Documentation.)
 - 2. Enter a record in to NCIC on the subject. This record should include all descriptors obtained through step 1. Additional identifiers such as scars, marks and tattoos, aliases, additional dates of birth, etc., should be added to the record through the use of the Enter Missing Person Supplemental Screen.
 - 3. After the record is entered, query the NCIC entry to obtain a hard copy for second party verification purposes.

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4. Entry of medical and dental information is to be entered within sixty (60) days of original entry, if available. This will be sent to each department by way of a \$.K administrative message. An attempt at obtaining this information should be taken. **a notation shall be made in the case file indicating when this attempt was made and what the outcome was. e.g: child has returned, dental records obtained, etc. This 60 day update is a mandatory FBI requirement and must be documented somewhere in the case file.