

BEACHWOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: MISSING PERSONS/CHILDREN		NUMBER: 06-12
EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/21/2015	AMENDS/SUPERSEDES: 05/20/2014	
CROSS REFERENCE: 13-01 Amber Alert; ORC 5502.522 (Silver Alert)		REVIEW DATE: May

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish responsibilities and guidelines for the investigation of missing persons/children.

POLICY

Many missing person reports involve individuals who have voluntarily left home for personal reasons, while other reports are often unfounded or quickly resolved. However, there are many instances in which persons disappear for unexplained reasons and under circumstances where they may be considered at risk. The roles of the dispatcher and initial responding officer are critical in identifying the circumstances surrounding missing persons and in identifying those persons at risk.

Therefore, it is the policy of this agency that (1) all reports of missing persons be given full consideration and attention by members of this agency to include careful recording and investigation of factual circumstances surrounding the disappearance in accordance with this policy, and (2) that particular care be exercised in instances involving missing or unidentified children and those who may be mentally or physically impaired or others who are insufficiently prepared to take care of themselves.

PROCEDURES

.10 REPORTING/CLASSIFICATION OF MISSING PERSONS

- A. There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person. Missing person reports shall be taken in-person in conformance with the criteria of this policy and the criticality of the incident.
- B. A person may be declared "missing" when his/her whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable parties as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject's behavior patterns, plans or routines.
- C. An individual may be considered "missing-critical" / "at risk" who meets the foregoing criteria and who, among other possible circumstances:
 - may be the subject of foul play;
 - because of age (young or old), may be unable to properly safeguard or care for himself/herself;
 - suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life threatening if left untreated/unattended;
 - is a patient of a psychiatric institution and is considered potentially dangerous to himself or others;
 - has demonstrated the potential for suicide; or
 - may have been involved in a boating, swimming or other sporting accident or natural disaster.

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- D. Special care should be taken before classifying juveniles who are missing. A thorough investigation should take place prior to the classification. When not enough facts are present to determine otherwise, juveniles who are missing shall be considered “missing – critical / at risk.” Missing juveniles shall be classified in the following manner:
- Runaway
 - Abandonment
 - Abducted
 - Unknown
- E. Based on the outcome of initial inquiries, a decision may be made concerning the potential danger posed to the missing person and the urgency of police response.

.20 INITIAL REPORT TAKING

- A. The initial report taker must gather as much pertinent information as possible in order to properly classify a missing person report and initiate proper response. This includes the following information:
- Name, date of birth, age, social security number, address, and physical description of the subject and relationship of the reporting party to the missing person.
 - Time and location of last known contact and the identity of anyone accompanying the subject.
 - The extent of any search for the subject.
 - Whether the subject has been missing on prior occasions and the degree to which the absence departs from established behavior patterns, habits or plans.
 - Whether the individual has been involved recently in:
 1. domestic incidents;
 2. suffered emotional trauma or life crises;
 3. demonstrated unusual, uncharacteristic or bizarre behavior; or
 4. is dependent on drugs or alcohol or has a history of mental illness.
 - The current physical condition of the subject and whether the person is currently on prescription medication.
- B. If the missing person is a child, inquiry should also determine if the child:
- qualifies for Amber Alert activation (see policy 13-01);
 - is or may be with any adult who could cause him/her harm;
 - may have been the subject of a parental abduction;
 - has previously run away from home, has threatened to do so or has a history of explainable or unexplainable absences for extended periods of time; and
 - the category under which the child is reported missing.
- C. A supervisory officer shall be notified immediately upon classification of a report as “missing-critical / at risk” or as a missing child.
- D. Responding officers should inquire with reporting parties whether the individual reported missing is likely in possession of a cellular device which could assist in locating them if they retained possession of it. In the case of an individual classified as “missing critical / at risk” or a missing child where an exigent circumstance threshold is met, cellular providers can be contacted to assist in locating an active cellular device on their networks. The current list of law enforcement contact numbers for major carriers is titled “Law Enforcement

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Contacts for Cell Phone Companies and can be located in Department / Resources. Reporting officers shall notify and consult with a supervisory officer prior to contacting cell phone providers for intervention.

NOTE: A cell provider may provide location information for devices listed on their accounts to authorized account holders (many times the person reporting) without police intervention.

- E. Officers should question reporting parties to determine if the individual reported missing maintains any social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that could provide information as to their possible location.

.22 OHIO'S MISSING ADULT ALERT PROGRAM

This is an alert system developed to quickly notify the public and media outlets about endangered missing adults, age 65 or older, or those with mental impairments.

A. MISSING ADULT CRITERIA

- The local law enforcement agency confirms that the individual is missing, and
- The individual is 65 years of age or older or has a mental impairment, and
- The disappearance of the individual poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the individual, and
- There is sufficient descriptive information about the individual and the circumstances surrounding the individual's disappearance to indicate that activation of the alert will help locate the individual.

B. MISSING ADULT – POLICE ACTIONS

If ALL of the above criteria are met, do the following in addition to the directions below in .25 MISSING CRITICAL SUBJECTS.

- Activate the "Missing Adult Alert" by entering the victim into LEADS / NCIC using the "SA" (Silver/ Senior Alert – Endangered) entry code on the missing person entry screen.
- You may also contact B.C.I.&I. at 740-845-2224 to assist in issuing a "Missing Adult Alert."

C. MISSING ADULT ALERT – CHAIN OF EVENTS

A representative of the Ohio Attorney General's Office will contact this agency to activate the alert which will be comprised of the actions and options below:

- A blast e-mail or fax message is sent throughout the state to media outlets.
- The information is posted on electronic billboards and Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) signboards in the local area of the alert.
- The website (www.missingadults.ohio.gov) will be populated with information and photo (if provided) on the missing adult.
- A law enforcement radio broadcast and computer message is sent to all law enforcement agencies in the state.
- A toll free telephone line for tips and information is activated: 866-693-9171.
- A Truckers Alert System is activated.
- The Ohio Lottery will post the information on lottery terminals.
- Special law enforcement response teams and programs are offered to assist in the search for the missing person, including C.A.R.T. (Child Abduction Response Team(s)).

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- D. MISSING ADULTS THAT DO NOT MEET CRITERIA IN (A.) ABOVE (See .25)
- Consider still contacting the media (with proper approval) to provide information concerning the missing adult that may assist in locating them.
 - Enter the missing person through LEADS and NCIC.
 - Send a LEADS administration broadcast to all Ohio law enforcement terminals or appropriate regional terminals.

.25 MISSING CRITICAL SUBJECTS – ATTEMPT TO LOCATE / SEARCHES

- A. For missing parties considered “missing - critical” / “at risk” as defined in .10 C. above, the shift supervisor (or other supervisor) shall coordinate an attempt to locate the subject as soon as enough information has been gathered to facilitate such action.
- B. The attempt to locate the missing person may vary and include utilizing personnel to conduct a formal search of an area, utilizing detectives to follow up on leads, door to door canvassing, etc. depending on the circumstances and nature of the disappearance.
- C. If necessary, the emergency service team supervisor may be contacted to assist in coordinating such an action. See also 10-05 Search and Rescue Missions for other procedures regarding searches.

.30 PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

The preliminary investigation shall also be used to gather additional information and to take those steps that will aid in the search for and location of a missing person. This includes gathering the following types of information and materials:

- A. Complete description of the subject and a recent photograph with a signed photo release from the reporting person.
- B. Details of any physical or emotional problems identified in .20 A. of this policy.
- C. Identity of the last person(s) to have seen the subject as well as friends, relatives, coworkers or associates who were or may have been in contact with the subject prior to disappearance.
- D. Plans, habits, routines and personal interests of the subject including places frequented or locations of particular personal significance.
- E. Indications of missing personal belongings, particularly money and other valuables.
- F. Any suggestions of foul play or accident.
- G. In the case of missing children, officers shall be particularly cognizant of information that may suggest the potential for parental abduction or the possibility of stranger abduction, as well as:
- the presence of behavioral problems;
 - past instances of running away;
 - signs of an abusive home environment or dysfunctional family situation;
 - whether the child is believed to be with adults who may pose a danger; and
 - the name and location of the school attended by the child and any persons who may be responsible for private transportation to and from the location.
- H. Upon verification of a missing person, a missing person report shall be completed and appropriate entries made in state and national information databases in accordance with established procedures (e.g.: NCIC and The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children). The investigating officer will contact the Cuyahoga County Missing Persons Liaison, Tanisha Knighton at 216-443-6882 or

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tknighton@cuyahogacounty.us and forward the missing person's information, photo, and signed photo release. The Cuyahoga County Missing Persons Checklist and Photo Release Form are located in Department / Resources.

NOTE: There shall be no delay in entering information on missing children into NCIC as soon as enough information is gathered.

- I. In the case of persons designated as "missing-critical / at risk," a supervisory officer may:
 - direct the dispatcher to broadcast to all persons on duty all information necessary to identify the missing person;
 - direct the dispatcher to send a teletype to surrounding departments or other appropriate areas with information on the missing person, and
 - authorize mobilization of resources necessary for an area search.
- J. The officer taking the missing person report must also consider additional resources that may be utilized. A listing of several useful resources can be found on the Missing Persons Investigative Resources list which is located in Department / Resources.

.40 FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION

Follow-up investigations of missing persons should include but should not be limited to the following actions and activities:

- A. Request release of dental records and any fingerprints available.
- B. Contact hospitals and the coroner's office as appropriate for injured or deceased persons fitting the description of the missing person.
- C. Thoroughly check the location at which the missing person was last seen and conduct interviews as appropriate with persons who were with the individual or who may work in or frequent the area.
- D. Conduct interviews with any additional family, friends, work associates, schoolmates and teachers as well as school counselors and social case workers, as appropriate, to explore the potential for foul play, voluntary flight, or, in the case of juveniles, parental kidnapping or running away.
- E. Provide identification and related information to all elements of this agency, neighboring police agencies and, if parental or stranger-to-stranger abduction is suspected, the F.B.I.
- F. Decisions to use local media to help locate missing persons shall be made with the approval of the chief of police and the missing person's family.
- G. The lead investigator shall maintain routine on-going contact with the missing person's closest relative concerning progress of the investigation. These and other relevant individuals shall be informed that they must notify the lead investigator as soon as any contact is made with the missing person.
- H. After a person has been missing for 30 days, use of the Ohio Attorney General's "Project LINK" program should be considered. This program uses the DNA samples of relatives of missing persons to be compared against the samples of DNA profiles in the database which are those of unidentified human remains.
 - The program operates through BCI&I and the Ohio Missing Children Clearinghouse. The state database is also linked to other states, which allows searching other states' unidentified remains DNA databases.
 - If relatives elect to participate in the program, the following procedures should be followed:

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1. Request a "LINK" kit by contacting BCI&I at 740-845-2429 or 740-845-2100. The kits are free of charge and contain instructions for usage.
2. The completed kit should be returned to the following address:
Ohio Bureau of Criminal
Identification and Investigation
ATTN: CIU
P.O. Box 365
London, Ohio 43140
3. Other personal belongings may be submitted for testing such as a toothbrush, razor, pillow case, hairbrush, inhaler, articles of clothing, etc.
4. Since children inherit half their DNA from their biological mother and the other half from their biological father, the best possible DNA link would come from samples provided by the biological parents or children of the missing person.
5. Advise providers that no personal identifiable information will be entered into the LINK database. Only their DNA profiles will be searched through the DNA profiles of unidentified human remains in the database.

.50 ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES OF JUVENILE UNIT FOR MISSING JUVENILES

- A. The report is made available to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse through the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation.
- B. No later than 30 days after the original entry into LEADS and NCIC computer networks, Juvenile Unit personnel shall review the original entry for verification and if available, provide dispatch with any additional information (i.e., medical and dental records) to use in updating the entry.
- C. Juvenile Unit personnel shall institute or assist with appropriate search and investigation procedures.
- D. Juvenile Unit personnel shall maintain close liaison with the National Center for Missing and Exploited children for the exchange of information and technical assistance in the missing children cases.
- E. See 13-25 section .30 re: "A Child Is Missing Alert"

.60 RECOVERY OF MISSING PERSONS AND CASE CLOSURE

- A. Competent adults, having left home for personal reasons, cannot be forced to return home. Officers locating such individuals shall:
 - advise them that they are the subject of a missing person investigation;
 - ask if they desire the reporting party or next-of-kin to be notified of their whereabouts; and
 - make provisions to transmit this information to the reporting party or next-of-kin if permitted by the missing person.
- B. Unless criminal matters necessitate other action, desires of missing persons not to reveal their whereabouts shall be honored.
- C. In all cases, reporting parties shall be informed of the well-being of located missing persons.
- D. Missing persons shall be questioned to establish the circumstances surrounding their disappearance and whether criminal activity was involved.
- E. In cases involving juveniles, officers shall ensure that:
 - the juvenile receives medical attention if necessary in a timely manner;

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- initial questioning of the youth identifies the circumstances surrounding the child's disappearance, any individuals who may be criminally responsible and/or whether an abusive or negligent home environment was a contributory factor; and
 - that parents, guardians and/or the person reporting the missing youth are notified in a timely manner.
- F. Upon location of a missing person, all agencies and information systems previously contacted for assistance will be notified or updated.
- A copy of any locate, clearance, or cancel received or sent on LEADS shall be forwarded to the Investigative Bureau by dispatch personnel sending or receiving such information.
- G. Where indicated, proper follow-up action shall be taken for abuse and neglect cases.
- H. The follow-up report shall include a complete narrative on the whereabouts, actions and activities of children while missing.
- I. Where indicated, criminal charges shall be filed with the prosecutor's office.

APPROVED BY THE ORDER OF:

Keith Winebrenner, Chief of Police