



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

MISSING PERSONS-ADULTS

EFFECTIVE: 11-16-2016

REVISED: N/A

DISTRIBUTION: ALL PERSONNEL

PURPOSE: The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for the investigation and handling of reported missing adults, to ensure all missing adult cases are investigated in a professional and timely manner, and to resolve the cases as soon as possible by locating the missing adult.

POLICY: It is the policy of the Elyria Police Department to respond to and thoroughly investigate all reports of missing persons. Investigating officers are required to determine, based on the individual circumstances of each case, the age of the missing person and whether foul play and suspicious circumstances exist. Any further action will be determined based upon that investigation.

DEFINITIONS:

“Adult” means a person that is eighteen (18) years of age or older.

“Missing Adult” for the purposes of this directive, means any adult, who meets one or more of the following characteristics:

1. “Disability” (EMD): The adult is missing and has a physical or mental disability (e.g. including but not limited to the adult has a mental capacity problem or some type of medical condition, the adult is a patient of a mental institution or under a mental health doctor’s care).
2. “Endangered” Missing Person (EME): The adult is missing under circumstances indicating that the his/her safety may be in danger (e.g. including but not limited to the adult is unable to properly safeguard or care for oneself, the adult has demonstrated the potential for suicide, evidence of foul play)
3. “Involuntary” (EMI): The adult is missing under circumstances indicating that his/her disappearance was not voluntary.
4. “Other” (EMO): The adult’s whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by the reporting party as being unusual or suspicious based on the missing adult’s behavioral patterns, plans, and/or routines and there is reasonable concern for his/her safety (e.g. including but not limited to the adult was involved in a boating, swimming, or other sporting event that may present a hazard).
5. “Catastrophe Victim” (EMV): The adult is missing following a catastrophe.

“Endangered Missing Adult Alert” can be activated at the discretion of the law enforcement agency when the following criteria are met:

1. Law Enforcement confirms the adult is sixty-five (65) years of age or older **OR** the adult has a mental impairment; **AND**
2. Law enforcement has confirmed the adult is missing; **AND**
3. The disappearance of the adult poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the adult; **AND**
4. There is sufficient descriptive information about the adult and the circumstances surrounding his/her disappearance to indicate that the activation of the alert will help locate the him/her.

“Mental Impairment” means a substantial disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, and/or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behavior, or ability to live independently or provide self-care as certified by a licensed physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist.

“Evidence of Foul Play” includes, but is not limited to, evidence that the person's home or car is in disarray, evidence of a struggle between the person and another person.

“Ohio Blue Alert” is a notification system intended to enlist public assistance in the event of a tragedy involving a critically injured or killed law enforcement officer where the suspect(s) are still at large, or in the event of a missing law enforcement officer. The criteria, established in Ohio Revised Code, Section 5502.53, must be met to initiate a Blue Alert. When the local law enforcement agency determines that a case meets the criteria for an Ohio Blue Alert, it may initiate the alert through the Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS). If the missing person is a law enforcement officer, both of the following criteria must be met to initiate a Blue Alert:

1. A local law enforcement agency confirms that a law enforcement officer has been seriously injured or killed, and a suspect has not been apprehended, **OR** that a law enforcement officer is missing while on duty under circumstances warranting concern for the law enforcement officer’s safety; **AND**
2. There is sufficient descriptive information about the suspect or the circumstances surrounding a law enforcement officer’s injury, death or disappearance to indicate that activation of the alert may help locate a suspect or a missing law enforcement officer.

I. PROCEDURES

A. Reporting: **THERE IS NO WAITING PERIOD TO REPORT SOMEONE MISSING.** If based on the report the criteria for a “Missing Adult” has been met the officer shall take the report. **IF IN DOUBT THE OFFICER SHALL COMPLETE A MISSING PERSON REPORT.**

1. If there is question regarding the jurisdiction over the handling and investigation of a reported missing adult the following will apply:
 - a. If it is reported that any adult’s disappearance originated within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Elyria, the officer shall handle and investigate the report in accordance with this directive.
 - b. If the origin of the adult’s disappearance is unknown **AND** the last known location of the adult was in the City of Elyria, the officer shall handle and investigate the report in accordance with this directive.
 - c. If the origin of the adult’s disappearance is unknown **AND** the missing adult is a resident or temporarily residing within the City of Elyria, the officer shall handle and investigate the report in accordance with this directive.
 - d. If it is reported that the adult’s disappearance originated outside the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Elyria, the assigned officer will provide reasonable assistance to the reporting party to file the missing person report. This assistance shall include identifying the proper agency having jurisdiction and the phone number of the agency.
 1. If the information indicates that the missing adult may be in the City of Elyria, the officer shall take concerted efforts to locate the missing adult and shall assist the handling agency with locating the missing adult, upon request or as directed.
 2. If the agency with proper jurisdiction refuses to assist or to accept the missing person’s report, the assigned officer shall handle and investigate the report in accordance with this directive.
 - e. Any additional circumstances, not already addressed, shall be communicated to the OIC for guidance on how the incident shall be handled.

B. Initial Reporting and Response: (CALEA 41.2.5.A&B)

1. When any party reports that an adult is missing the recipient of the report (Officer, Dispatcher, Other) will obtain as much information as possible from the person making the report. If appropriate, the recipient shall give out an immediate radio broadcast. This broadcast should include:
 - a. A physical description of the adult and his/her clothing.
 - b. The last known location of the adult.
 - c. Any known direction of travel or destination.
 - d. Any additional information that would assist in locating the adult.
2. Generally, one unit shall be dispatched to reports of missing adults **UNLESS** it's reported that there is evidence of foul play, or the adult's safety may be in danger, or his/her disappearance was not voluntary.
3. A Field Supervisor shall be notified and dispatched to the scene of all missing adult reports whenever it's reported that the adult's safety may be in danger, or his/her disappearance was not voluntary, or there is evidence of foul play.

C. Initial Investigation:

1. An officer shall conduct the preliminary investigation and initial follow up on all missing adult cases. Until relieved of these responsibilities, the officer shall investigate and gather information regarding the circumstances surrounding the missing adult's disappearance, the missing adult's physical description and clothing description if known, confirm the age of the missing adult, and obtain a current photograph. **(CALEA 41.2.5.A)**
2. The assigned officer shall confirm and disseminate updated information as appropriate, ensuring that a BOL (Be On the Lookout) has been broadcasted and MDT message sent, as soon as adequate information becomes available. **(CALEA 41.2.5.B)**
3. If information indicates that the adult's safety may be in danger, there is evidence of foul play, or that his/her disappearance was not voluntary, the assigned officers shall: **(CALEA 41.2.5.F)**
 - a. Secure the area where the adult was last seen and treat as a crime scene.
 - b. Notify the OIC and request investigative assistance.
 - c. Locate, separate and interview all witnesses.
 - d. Request additional resources as needed. (e.g. evidence technicians, search, canvass, etc.)
 - e. Conduct a search of immediate area where the adult went missing, as well as the adult's home.
4. If the missing adult meets the criteria to activate an Endangered Missing Adult Alert or Ohio Blue Alert, the officer shall immediately notify the shift's OIC. The shift's OIC will determine if investigative personnel shall be notified and if any alerts are to be activated. To activate these alerts see **Endangered Missing Adult Alert** or **Ohio Blue Alert** procedures below. **(CALEA 41.2.5.F)**
5. The officer shall ensure that appropriate waivers (e.g. dental, medical) are reviewed and signed by the spouse, next of kin or guardian. If this cannot be accomplished initially at the scene the officer shall complete this step during follow-up investigation. The officer shall instruct the reporting party to immediately notify the Police Department if the adult returns or is located.

6. The officer shall conduct a preliminary investigation in an attempt to locate the missing adult. The officer will make every reasonable effort to locate the missing adult and/or develop additional leads. **CALEA 41.2.5.E**
7. If the officer receives information causing them to believe the missing adult may be in another agency's jurisdiction, the officer shall notify that jurisdiction, provide information on the missing adult, and request, if necessary, further follow up action by that jurisdiction's agency.
8. As soon as practicable, the assigned officer will return to the station and complete the Missing Persons Report form (EPD Form 506). Missing adults who meet the criteria for entry into LEADS/NCIC will be entered by Records personnel when on-duty. When the Records Section is not staffed, a missing adult meeting the immediate entry requirement will be entered by Dispatch personnel. LEADS/NCIC entries shall be required as follows: **CALEA 41.2.5.C**
 - a. Missing adults who are 18, 19, or 20 years of age will be entered immediately. Federal Law requires entry of missing adults 18 years of age but less than 21 years of age, into the Law Enforcement Automated Data System/National Crime Information Center (LEADS/NCIC) within two (2) hours from the time the original report is received.
 - b. Missing adults 21 years of age and older:
 - 1.If foul play is suspected, the information shall be entered into NCIC within seven (7) days.
 - 2.If no foul play is suspected and the missing person has not returned, the information shall be entered into NCIC within thirty (30) days.
 - 3.If no foul play was indicated initially, but evidence of such becomes known before the end of the seven (7) day period, the information shall be entered into NCIC before the end of the seven (7) day period.
 - 4.If no foul play was indicated initially, but evidence of such becomes known after the seven day period, the information shall be entered into NCIC within forty-eight (48) hours.
 - c. Entering personnel shall attach the NCIC printout to the back of the original Missing Persons Report form.
 - d. The completed original report form will be given to the shift OIC. The OIC will review the form, ensuring that all appropriate fields and requirements are completed, before signing the form. The OIC shall forward a copy of the report form with a copy of the case report to the Investigative Division.
 - e. The original report form shall be filed alphabetically in the binder, in the records room until the adult is located.
9. The officer shall complete a case report and narrative detailing all relevant facts of the incident.
 - a. The "Occurred Incident Type" shall be recorded as Missing Person.
 - b. The missing person shall be recorded as a "Subject Type" equaling "Missing Person".
 - c. The narrative shall describe the known facts and circumstances regarding the missing adult's disappearance, any steps taken to locate the missing adult, notifications made to other agencies or organizations, and any remaining leads that require further investigation.
 - d. Import and attach a photo image of the missing adult to the case documents. This will allow the officer and other personnel immediate access to the adult's photo in the future.
10. The OIC shall review the case report and narrative ensuring that all requirements have been completed (e.g. photo obtained, reasonable leads investigated, waivers signed, LEADS entry, notifications, etc.). The OIC shall add the missing adult's information to the EPD Hot Sheet.

11. The officer shall continue the investigation until all reasonable leads have been exhausted or the conclusion of his/her shift. The investigating officer will notify the OIC if his/her shift ends without the missing adult being located. The officer shall communicate to the OIC any remaining leads that still require follow-up.

D. Additional Investigative Considerations: (CALEA 41.2.5.D)

The Field Supervisor and investigative personnel shall follow sound investigative strategies. When circumstances indicate that the adult's safety may be in danger, or his/her disappearance was not voluntary, or there is evidence of foul play, the following must be considered:

1. Seal/protect area of adult's home where personal items can be located, such as hairbrush, toothbrush, soiled underwear, fingerprints that can be used for later search and/or identification purposes.
2. If information indicates that the missing adult may be on foot, initiate neighborhood canvass in area where the adult was last observed and interview ALL persons. Note these actions in case narratives.
3. Establish a department liaison with the family.
4. Request canine or professional search assistance.

E. Follow-Up Investigations of Missing Adults and Case Assignment (CALEA 41.2.5.D&E)

1. If the assigned officer concludes his/her shift without the missing adult being located, and reasonable leads remain that require further investigation, the OIC will assign the investigation to another on-duty officer to follow up. The assigned officer shall complete a case narrative describing his/her follow-up actions. This process shall continue until all reasonable leads have been exhausted or the case is turned over to the Investigative Division.
2. An officer will be assigned to investigate any new leads received regarding the missing adult's whereabouts.
3. If the missing adult is not located, the incident will be forwarded to the Investigative Division for follow-up. If not already assigned, the responsibility for the follow-up investigation of reported missing adults will be with the Investigative Division.
 - a. Each missing adult case will be assigned to an investigator, who will monitor the progress of the investigation and maintain contact next of kin, if applicable.
 - b. The assigned investigator will follow up on missing adult cases.
 - c. The investigator shall make periodic contact with the reporting party and next of kin to attempt to identify if any new leads exist.
 - d. If a photograph of the missing adult was not available at the time of the filing of the report, the investigator will make efforts to obtain one and attach it the original copy of the report.
 - e. The assigned detective is responsible for preparing a case file and updating the case activity and status.
4. If, after seven (7) days, the missing adult is not located, the assigned detective will submit the case file to an Investigative Division supervisor. The supervisor will review the facts of the case and determine the appropriate course of action.

F. Located Missing Adults

1. An officer shall be detailed to the scene of any located or returned missing adults whenever any of the following apply:
 - a. The adult was entered into NCIC as an “Endangered”.
 - b. The adult was entered into NCIC as an “Involuntary”.
 - c. The adult was entered in accordance with an “Ohio Blue Alert”.
 - d. Any indication or report that the missing adult was a victim of any criminal act.
 - e. Anytime as directed by a Shift Supervisor or assigned investigative personnel.
2. All other located missing adults may be confirmed by an officer upon receipt of credible information, from an adult, or any law enforcement officer, that the missing adult was located, and no suspicion of criminal activity exists. Confirmations may be taken by phone or in person under these circumstances.
3. Upon confirming the return or the location of a missing adult, the assigned officer shall:
 - a. Locate the original report in the RMS and add a supplemental narrative to the case.
 1. Include all pertinent information regarding the status of the missing adult (e.g. alive, deceased, hospitalized, etc.)
 2. Identify the whereabouts of the missing adult since he/she was reported missing, if determined or reported.
 3. Describe how the return was confirmed (e.g. in person, over the phone, etc.)
 4. Identify the facts and circumstances of the case.
 5. If information indicates that a criminal offense has occurred, the officer shall thoroughly investigate the matter or notify the OIC, requesting assistance from Investigative Division personnel.
 6. Close the case with a disposition.
 - b. The officer shall complete the return portion of the Missing Person Report form and turn it in to the shift’s OIC for review. The OIC will review and sign off on the report form to ensure that the missing adult’s information is taken out of LEADS and all appropriate reports, forms are filled out accordingly.
4. If an entry was made into LEADS/NCIC, the shift’s OIC will direct Records/Dispatch personnel to cancel the entry. Records personnel shall promptly update and remove, as appropriate, missing adult’s information in the LEADS/NCIC Missing Persons file. The LEADS/NCIC entry will be cleared and a copy of the printout will be attached to the back of the original copy of the Missing Persons Report.
5. Original and completed Missing Persons Report forms shall be pulled from the binder and forwarded to the Investigative Division. Investigative Division personnel will scan a copy of the completed report into the computer file.

II. ENDANGERED MISSING ADULT ALERT (CALEA 41.2.5.B&F)

The Endangered Missing Adult Alert was created to provide a tool to law enforcement to alert the public of a missing adult in a life threatening situation, utilizing many of the same tools similar to the AMBER Alert to disseminate the alert. The criteria for the activation of the alert are included in the **DEFINITIONS** section located at the top of the directive. This alert is most commonly issued for a missing elderly person (65 year old or older) who suffers from Alzheimer's or other related illness. The alert is also issued for any age missing adult who suffers from serious mental illness to such extent they cannot take care for themselves.

- A. Prior to activating the alert, the assigned officer must investigate the missing person report to verify the person is actually missing.
- B. If the criteria are met for the alert, the OIC may request the alert by directing Dispatch or Records personnel to enter the missing person into NCIC/LEADS using the "SA" code in the "MNP" field. This entry will then be sent to the BCI Missing Persons Unit who will call to verify the alert request. The entering employee shall then contact BCI representatives at (855) BCI-OHIO (855-224-6446) to confirm the entry.
- C. The OIC shall notify an on-duty Investigative Division Supervisor or, during non-working hours, the on-call supervisor. The on call supervisor shall determine if investigative personnel will be assigned to work the case.
- D. The OIC should consider assigning extra staff to the dispatch center to assist in handling any calls involving the endangered missing adult. Dispatch personnel shall pass on any active alerts to on-coming or relieving Dispatchers.
- E. If the adult is confirmed to have been recovered, the alert will be cancelled. In order to cancel the alert, the OIC will contact the Ohio Attorney General's Office, Missing Persons Unit at (855) BCI-OHIO (855-224-6446). The LEADS/NCIC entry shall be updated by Records or Dispatch.
- F. The OIC will document the activation and cancelation on the Command Officers Report and ensure that all case reports and narratives are completed, updated and reviewed.

III. OHIO BLUE ALERT (CALEA 41.2.5.B&F)

The Ohio Blue Alert is a notification system intended to enlist public assistance in the event of a tragedy involving a critically injured or killed law enforcement officer where the suspect(s) are still at large, or in the event of a missing law enforcement officer. The criteria for the activation of the alert are included in the **DEFINITIONS** section located at the top of the directive.

- A. If the criteria are met for the alert, the OIC shall request the alert by directing Dispatch or Records personnel to activate the Ohio Blue Alert. Dispatch personnel shall make an entry into the LEADS Ohio COP file and check the box for Blue Alert. A duty officer will call Dispatch to confirm the information.
- B. The OIC shall notify an on-duty Investigative Division Supervisor or, during non-working hours, the on-call supervisor. The on call supervisor shall determine if investigative personnel will be assigned to work the case.
- C. The OIC shall notify the Patrol Division Commander or his/her designee.

- D. The OIC should consider assigning extra staff to the dispatch center to assist in handling any calls involving the alert. Dispatch personnel shall pass on any active alerts to on-coming or relieving Dispatchers.
- E. If the officer is confirmed to have been recovered, the alert will be cancelled by clearing the entry from LEADS/NCIC. Additional assistance can be found through the Ohio Attorney General’s Office, Missing Persons Unit at (855) BCI-OHIO (855-224-6446). The LEADS/NCIC entry shall be updated by Records or Dispatch.
- F. The OIC will document the activation and cancelation on the Command Officers Report and ensure that all case reports and narratives are completed, updated and reviewed.

IV. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Missing Person Alert Guidebook can be accessed in the shared folders.

W:\Manuals\Missing Persons

During an active alert, contact can be made with the OSHP Hub/Columbus Communications Center at 614-466-2660. The Ohio Attorney General’s Office, Missing Persons Unit provides a toll-free hotline, (855) BCI-OHIO, to field calls from law enforcement, parents, community members, and the media. The hotline is answered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Duane P. Whitely
Chief of Police

AUTHORITY

SUPERSEDES: N/A

CROSS REFERENCE TO DIRECTIVES: ORC 2901.41-Missing person reports policies, ORC 2901.42-Missing person report indicating foul play, ORC 5502.522, Ohio Missing persons Alerts Guidebook

CROSS REFERENCE TO STANDARDS: CALEA 41.2.5

CROSS REFERENCE TO FORMS: Missing Person Report (EPD Form 506)