



## Parma Police Department

### Policy, Procedures and Rules Manual

#### □ MISSING OR ABDUCTED PERSONS

Policy Number: OP 22

Revision Date: 2 Feb. 11

Reference: ORC 2901.30, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Amber Alert Program, A Child Is Missing Program

Distribution: All Officers, Records Division, Safety, Communications, Law Department

#### I. Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish responsibilities and guidelines regarding the Parma Police Department's response to reports of missing persons and abducted children.

#### II. Policy Statement

- A. It shall be the policy of the Parma Police Department to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing persons and abducted children in the City of Parma. In addition, this agency holds that every child reported as missing will be considered "at risk" until significant information to the contrary is confirmed.
- B. Jurisdictional conflicts are to be avoided when a person is reported missing. If a missing person either resides in, or was last seen in this jurisdiction, this agency will immediately initiate the required reporting process. If a person resides in this jurisdiction and was last seen in another jurisdiction, but the law enforcement agency covering that jurisdiction chooses not to take a missing person report, this agency will assume reporting and investigative responsibility.
- C. Questions concerning parental custody occasionally arise in relation to a missing child report. Since the safety of the missing child(ren) is paramount, members of this agency will open a case when it can be shown that the child has been removed, or missing without explanation, from any place where the child is to be. It shall be the policy of this agency to accept the report of a missing or abducted child from anyone having custodial responsibility of the child when the child became missing. The parent or the legal guardian shall be contacted as soon as possible to officially approve of the investigation and to obtain more information.

#### III. Definitions

- A. "Missing person" includes all persons whether adult or a child under 18 years of age whose whereabouts are unknown.

## Missing Person (continued)

- B. The term “missing child” refers to a person who is younger than 18 years of age, and whose whereabouts are unknown to his or her parent, guardian, or responsible party.
- C. A missing child will be considered “at-risk” when one or more of the unusual circumstances noted in paragraph D are present.
- D. The term “unusual circumstances” refers to a missing child who is:
  - 1. Thirteen years of age or younger. This age was established by the Federal Missing Children Assistance Act because children of this age group have not established independence from parental control and do not have the survival skills necessary to protect themselves from exploitation on the streets - or –
  - 2. Believed to be one or more of the items noted below:
    - a. Out of the zone of safety for his or her age, developmental stage, and/or physical condition. The zone of safety will vary depending on the age of the child and his or her developmental stage. In the case of an infant, for example, the zone of safety will include the immediate presence of an adult custodian or the crib, stroller, or carriage in which the infant was placed. For a school-aged child the zone of safety might be the immediate neighborhood or the route taken between home and school.
    - b. Mentally diminished. If the child is developmentally disabled or emotionally disturbed, he or she may have difficulty communicating with others about needs, identity, or address. The disability places the child in danger of exploitation or other harm.
    - c. Drug dependent, including both prescription and illicit substances. Any drug dependency puts the missing child at risk. The diabetic or epileptic child requires regular medication or his or her condition may become critical. The illicit drug abuser, on the other hand, may resort to crime or become the victim of exploitation.
    - d. A potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation. Risk to the child can be assumed if investigation indicates a possible abduction, violence at the scene of an abduction, or signs of sexual abuse.
    - e. In a life-threatening situation. The environment in which the child is missing may be particularly hazardous. Examples of a dangerous environment could be a busy highway for a toddler or an all-night truck stop for a teenager.
    - f. Absent from home for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing. While some parents may incorrectly assume that 24 hours must pass before law enforcement will accept a missing-person case, a delay in reporting might also indicate the existence of neglect or abuse within the family.
    - g. Believed to be with others who could endanger his or her welfare. A missing child in such circumstances is in danger not only of sexual exploitation, but also of involvement in criminal activity such as burglary, shoplifting, and robbery.



## Missing Person (continued)

3. For missing persons with special circumstances such as the elderly, persons with mental or health issues a general case report will be completed and the OIC will be notified to start an investigation to locate the person using techniques referred to in addendum I.

### B. Missing Person – Parmadale

1. Parmadale staff will fill out a missing person case report when a juvenile has run away from the facility. The officer dispatched to the complaint will pick up the report from Parmadale staff. The officer will review the report for completeness and make whatever corrections/additions necessary to complete the report. He will also affix his signature at the bottom of the report. The completed report will be returned to the communications center and entered into LEADS/NCIC as soon as possible.
2. When a missing juvenile has returned, Parmadale staff will call the Parma Police Department advising us of the return. The staff member will verify his/her identity to the police dispatcher using the code UCR-25. Dispatch will remove the found runaway from the computer and forward any information to the juvenile detectives.

### C. Missing Person – Child

#### 1. The Call Taker

- a. The call taker (Communications Personnel, Front Desk Officer, etc.) who receives the report of a missing child will be responsible to determine if circumstances of the report meet the definition of a missing child as set forth in Section III, B. by questioning the caller about the circumstances of the report. The call-taker can make a preliminary assessment about the level of risk to the missing child. This assessment shall also prepare the call-taker to promptly activate additional response protocols if needed.
- b. No Unusual Circumstances
  1. A missing person report will be taken on any child who is reported missing and will follow the guidelines set forth in II B and C. The officer should also inquire if the missing child has an original set of fingerprints available. If available, both picture and fingerprints should be made part of the missing person report. This report will be entered into LEADS/NCIC as soon as possible. If the minor has been missing more than 30 days, the Juvenile Detectives should obtain dental records for entry into LEADS per ORC. 2901.30 section F.
- c. If Unusual Circumstances Are Reported:
  1. The call taker shall immediately dispatch an officer to the scene of the report and notify the police supervisor on duty;

## Missing Person (continued)

2. Transmit the appropriate radio alerts and other notifications. A critical responsibility of the call taker is to obtain sufficient information from the reporting party to broadcast a radio message that alerts other officers, and other agencies if necessary, about the circumstances of the child's disappearance. Basic information should include the child's height, weight, hair and eye color, and clothing, as well as the location the child was last seen.
  3. Most importantly, the radio alert should contain information known about a possible abductor with special emphasis on the description of the suspect and vehicle used as well as direction of travel. Search agency records for related information. It is essential for responding officers to know if the child or family has been the subject of previous reports that may have a bearing on this incident. If possible, records should also be reviewed to learn if any incidents have been reported in the area that may have investigative value in this case. Complaints such as attempted abductions, prowlers, public indecency, and suspicious persons will be of particular interest. Access should also be made to the Sex Offender Registration list to determine if individuals designated as sexual predators reside in the area.
  4. Document all pertinent information and communications.
2. The First Responder
- a. The officer who is assigned as a first responder to the report of a missing child will be responsible to:
    1. Respond promptly to the scene of the report
    2. Interview the complainant or parent(s) making the initial report to gain insight into the circumstances surrounding the disappearance.
    3. Obtain a description of the missing child and relay that information to dispatch for immediate release.
    4. Verify that the child is in fact missing. First responders should never assume that searches conducted by distraught parents or others have been performed in a thorough manner. Another check of the house and grounds should be made that includes the places where children could be trapped, asleep or hiding. Special attention should be paid to enclosures like refrigerators, freezers, and the interior of parked vehicles where limited breathing air may place the child at even greater risk. In the case of older children, first responders should ask if parents have checked with the child's friends or perhaps overlooked or forgotten something the child may have said that would explain the absence. Note: a search of the home should be conducted even if the child was last seen elsewhere.
    5. Confirm the child's custody status and whether or not custody issues could play a part in the physical location of the child.
    6. Determine when, where, and by whom the child was last seen.

## Missing Person (continued)

7. Make an initial determination of the type of incident and whether the case could be considered an “unusual circumstances” case.
8. Determine whether Amber Alert or A Child Is Missing criteria has been met and should be activated.
9. Notify your direct supervisor of your findings and continue to gather on-scene information.
10. Obtain a description of the abductor(s) and other pertinent information from witnesses.
11. Provide detailed descriptive information to dispatch for broadcast updates.
12. Identify and hold everyone at the scene and determine their relationship to the missing child.
13. Secure and safeguard the area as a potential crime scene.
14. Prepare necessary reports and complete appropriate forms.

### 3. The Supervisor

- a. The supervisor who is assigned to the report of a missing child will be responsible to:
  1. Obtain a briefing from the first responder(s) and make a determination as to whether the case is an “unusual circumstances” incident.
  2. Determine if additional personnel and resources are needed to assist in the investigation.
  3. Determine whether Amber Alert or A Child Is Missing criteria have been met and should be activated.
  4. Establish a command post separate from the incident location and initiate the Child Abduction Protocol (have the protocol workbook and checklists brought to the command post from the station).

VI. All other duties and responsibilities from this point forward are clearly described in the CHILD ABDUCTION PROTOCOL located in the Sergeant’s Office.

# Addendum I

## Missing Persons-Special Circumstances (Elderly or Young or Mental/Health Issues)

1. First assigned unit should respond directly to the scene to access the situation, gather and transmit information to other units, get information for a report and advise the supervisor. Information gathered should include:
  - Subjects state of mind,
  - Health issues,
  - History of going missing, past destinations, habits, etc,
  - General safety of being on his own,
  - Last and next medications are needed.
2. Other units should check the area with information from reporting unit. In the case of a young subject, two units should check the residence for a possible hiding subject.
3. As soon as information is gathered/transmitted to units also advise neighboring cities via telephone (including RTA in case public transportation is utilized). Also if there is a possible destination-that city should be advised.
4. As soon as enough information can be given to Dispatch, a Teletype should be sent out via LEADS/CRIS.
5. When there is sufficient information to complete a Missing Person Case Report, it should be filed and the subject will be entered into LEADS as missing.
6. While searching for the subject any or all of the following aids should be considered/used:
  - A Child Is Missing (if during the accepted time period and fits the parameters),
  - Reverse 911,
  - Call out PFD for manpower and FLIR.
  - Get a K-9 from another city,
  - Contact news media to broadcast information-call the Public Information Officer,
  - Utilize a helicopter from CPD/news media (possibly with FLIR)-Call 216-623-5723 CPD Dispatch Supervisor,
  - Aux. Police for additional search,
  - CERT for additional personnel,
  - Amber Alert if criteria are met,
  - CART when it becomes available,
  - GPS or other cell phone trace.
7. The following should be taken into consideration when deciding which resources to utilize and when to utilize them:
  - Possible foul play,
  - The overall health/mental condition/maturity of the subject,
  - The need for medical care or medicine,
  - The out side weather conditions (temperature, extreme sun or snow, darkness etc.),
  - The clothing worn by the subject vs. the weather,
  - The length of time since the subject was last seen.

### **Missing Person Addendum I (continued)**

8. If all of these fail and the search is called off, the information should be passed on to subsequent shifts for special attention, and possibly resuming the search when conditions are more favorable or updated information is received.
9. When the subject is located all teletypes should be cancelled and all cities notified as well as anyone else who may be searching. The subject should be interviewed by an officer to determine if there was any criminal activity involved in his disappearance or during his absence-if possible.



# **Parma Police Department**

## **Child Abduction Protocol**

**A Comprehensive Action Plan for  
Responding to Incidents of  
Missing/Abducted Children**

Developed June, 2009

# Parma Police Department

## CHILD ABDUCTION PROTOCOL

### I. Mission Statement

The Parma Police Department considers the disappearance of a minor child to be an investigative priority, whether it is the result of unknown circumstances, a runaway incident, or a non-family abduction. In each of these incidents and based upon the specific case circumstances, command staff and supervisors must make decisions about the proper level of manpower and resources needed in order to bring the situation to a successful conclusion. While each of these incidents has the potential for harm to the child, experience has shown that the non-family abduction will most likely result in the injury, sexual assault and/or death of the child.

In those situations in which the child is known or thought to have been abducted by a non-family member, it is the Parma Police Department's policy to respond in a manner that holds the greatest chance for the safe return of the child and the apprehension of the suspect. This includes an aggressive investigation that is conducted in a timely manner, adequately staffed with manpower and resources, and follows a comprehensive investigative plan. This plan will be known as the **Child Abduction Protocol (CAP)**.

Patrol officers, detectives and supervisors involved in an investigation where the Child Abduction Protocol has been activated, are required to fulfill their assigned duties as thoroughly, efficiently and expeditiously as possible. It will be the policy of the Parma Police Department to utilize any assistance and resources of the private community and other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies that are deemed necessary to successfully conclude an investigation of an abducted child.

### II. Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to establish procedures to be followed in the event of child abduction. This plan will outline the Parma Police Department's response in a manner that holds the greatest chance for the safe return of the child and the apprehension of the suspect. The first few hours of a child abduction investigation may determine whether the eventual outcome is successful or not. Experience has shown that in cases where children have been victims of stranger abductions, there exists a "window of opportunity" lasting only a few hours, in which police are likely to successfully recover a child unharmed. To capitalize on this opportunity, it is imperative that the investigation be "front loaded" with as much intense investigative effort and resources as possible. The reasons for stranger abductions are many and varied. The motivation involved may be related to sexual gratification, narcotics, revenge, money and any other provocation the mind can imagine. It is therefore crucial that all divisions of the Parma Police Department work collectively to accomplish a thorough, comprehensive, and successful investigation.

## Missing Persons Addendum II (continued)

### III. Activation Criteria

- A. The responsibility and the decision to activate the Child Abduction Protocol will rest with the on-duty shift commander and should be considered once he/she has determined that any of the below listed criteria has been satisfied.
  - 1. There is information that suggests that the child was forcibly or intentionally removed or lured away from their location and is still missing.
  - 2. The missing child is a potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation, or is in a dangerous environment. "Dangerous environment" is a relative term that depends on the age and development of the child, and the circumstances surrounding the child's disappearance.
  - 3. The missing child is believed to be with people who are not family members and who endanger the welfare of the minor.
  - 4. The child is absent or has not returned home from school or other scheduled activity and this is inconsistent with an established pattern of behavior.
  - 5. It is the recommendation of the assigned officer or detective that their investigation supports the possibility that the child has been abducted.

### IV. Procedures

- A. The on-duty shift commander will initiate the Child Abduction Protocol and begin the necessary notifications and acquisition of resources.
- B. A Command Post and designated incident commander will be assigned to the area of disappearance
- C. Based on the specific incident, all necessary personnel will be assigned to carry out the duties as prescribed in the Child Abduction Protocol Incident Command Structure. See Addendum III.
- D. The on-duty shift commander will relinquish command of the incident once the Incident Commander has adequately replaced him/her.
- E. The assigned Incident Commander will carry out the roles and responsibilities outlined in this plan, and will provide assigned personnel with the appropriate duty assignments and investigative packets.

### V. Initial Investigative Procedures

- A. As soon as the Child Abduction Protocol has been activated, the Incident Commander shall implement orders that will ensure that specific initial investigative procedures are executed and completed within the first two to three hours of the investigation. The results of the leads worked and the information obtained in these critical first hours of the investigation may provide better direction for continued investigative efforts. These initial specific investigative duties are listed in the appropriate checklists for both individual personnel and divisions.

## Missing Persons Addendum II (continued)

### VI. Responsibilities

#### A. Incident Commander

1. The Incident Commander will be responsible for the following:
  - a. Assigning personnel to the duties of Assistant Incident Commander, Information Officer, Operations Supervisor, Logistics Supervisor and in prolonged cases, Finance Controller.
  - b. Directing all activities relative to the recovery of the child and the investigation of the crime.
  - c. Insuring that the Incident Commander Checklist is completed.
  - d. Ensuring that a staff meeting is held, no later than 4 hours after the activation of the Child Abduction Protocol. The purpose of this meeting will be to review the initial results of the investigation and search function and to plan the continuing investigation. The following personnel will attend this meeting:
    1. Incident Commander
    2. Assistant IC
    3. Information Officer
    4. Operations Supervisor
    5. Logistics Supervisor
    6. Assigned FBI Supervisor
    7. Chief of Police or his designee
    8. Finance Controller
    9. Crime Scene team leader
    10. Search team leader
    11. Any additional staff as indicated by the Incident Commander
  - e. Approving and coordinating the release of information by the Public Information Officer.
  - f. Reviewing the case progress and investigative priorities and making adjustments in manpower and resources as needed.
  - g. Establishing the work shifts for the personnel assigned to the investigation.
  - h. Scheduling a follow up meeting to take place just prior to a scheduled change in command.
  - i. Completing a progress report for the chief, and for review by the relieving Incident Commander.
  - j. Making a determination as to when to suspend or terminate the Child Abduction Protocol and turn the investigation over to the Detective Bureau for follow up.

#### B. Assistant Incident Commander

1. Responding to the Incident Command Post and assisting the Incident Commander in his duties.

## **Missing Persons Addendum II (continued)**

2. Preparing and distributing “Be On The Lookout” flyers (BOLOS) and informational bulletins.
3. Collection of cumulative data to be utilized for the development and maintenance of a timeline, and development of posters.

### **C. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER**

1. Responding to the Incident Command Post and acting as the official spokesperson for the Police Department, releasing only information pre-approved by the Incident Commander.
2. Advising the Incident Commander on media related issues.

### **D. OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR**

1. Assigning liaisons to the victim’s family, and providing the necessary investigative packets for the gathering of critical information to be forwarded to the Incident Commander.
2. Assuring that a Detective Bureau Supervisor is appointed to act as the team leader for the crime scene processing of both the abduction site and the victim’s home. Provide necessary investigative packets for completion.
3. Assign necessary detectives to detain and interview witnesses. Provide necessary investigative packets for completion.
4. Assign a supervisor to act as team leader for the search teams. Provide necessary investigative packets for completion.
5. Assign uniformed officers and a Patrol Supervisor to conduct neighborhood canvasses. Provide necessary investigative packets for completion.
6. Report directly to the Incident Commander and Assistant Incident Commander.

### **E. LOGISTICS SUPERVISOR**

1. Make a determination on communications protocol with respect to radio channels and cellular phone needs.
2. Establish a staging area that is distanced from the command post and incident scene. Establish command, or designate an officer to manage responding resources. Provide appropriate forms to designee for recording of personnel reporting to the staging area.
3. Oversee and manage the acquisition of external resources (FBI, helicopter, public works, fire department and canines).

## Missing Persons Addendum II (continued)

4. Designate command of Leads Tracking/Data Entry function to be performed at Communications Center. Provide the necessary checklists and reporting forms for call takers and data entry personnel.
5. In cases of extended investigations, establish a secure area for nourishment and supply replacement. Secure the necessary equipment and supplies, and if necessary contact the Red Cross for assistance with food and beverage.
6. Report directly to the Incident Commander.

### F. FINANCE CONTROLLER

1. In cases of extended investigations, the Chief of Police will appoint necessary personnel to this position.
2. Record and maintain all records of human resource deployment and expenses related to the incident.
3. Prepare daily reports for the Chief of Police with respect to costs associated with the incident.
4. Report to the Incident Commander.

### VII. Continuing Investigative Procedures

- A. All subsequent investigative efforts shall be coordinated through the Detective Bureau, and managed by the Captain or his/her designee. All members of the Parma Police Department are expressly prohibited from conducting independent investigations or activities related to the abduction. All information and leads shall be submitted to the Leads Tracking team to be logged, entered into the computer, and assigned for follow up.

### VIII. Victim Recovery

- A. Most child abductions usually result in one of three situations. The first is the return of a live child. The second is the recovery of the deceased child's body or remains. The third situation is one in which neither the child nor their body is ever recovered. It is critically important that each of these situations be handled according to a specific plan of action. Following are the procedures that will be followed in each of these situations.

#### 1. Child Recovered Alive

- a. In the event that the child is recovered alive, he/she will most likely have been the victim of some form of sexual or physical assault and will undoubtedly have suffered emotionally from the experience. At this point, there are several equally important but competing priorities that must be addressed. These include, but may not be limited to the following:

## Missing Persons Addendum II (continued)

1. The child's physical condition and the need for appropriate medical care.
  2. The child's emotional condition and the need for psychological care.
  3. The child and their family's desire to be reunited.
  4. The investigator's need to interview the child about the offense.
- b. While each case must be handled based on the specific fact situation present, the following are some procedures that should be followed:
1. As soon as the child is recovered, the Operations Supervisor shall be notified. The Operations Supervisor will be responsible for notifying the following:
    - i. Incident Commander
    - ii. Assistant Incident Commander
    - iii. Chief of Police
    - iv. Public Information Officer
    - v. Search Team Supervisor
    - vi. Assigned FBI Supervisor
    - vii. Family Liaison
    - viii. Crime Scene Team Leader
  2. **These notifications will not be made on the police radio.** All personnel should remember that the public and media are able to monitor police radio transmissions and they may overhear information about the recovery and attempt to go to the recovery location, the child's residence or the hospital.
- c. If the child appears injured, the personnel that recover the child shall request an ambulance to meet them at the recovery location. If at all possible, this request should be made by telephone and not by police radio, so as to prevent members of the public and media from responding to the location.
- d. If the paramedics that respond decide that the child requires immediate medical attention, the child will immediately be transported to the hospital.
- e. If the child does not appear injured, the Operations Supervisor will determine where the child shall be taken.
- f. As soon as practical after the child is recovered, the Operations Supervisor shall insure that the child's parents are contacted and informed of this fact. Police personnel that notify the parents about the child's recovery shall refrain from commenting in detail about the child's physical condition. The attending doctors will be responsible for discussing this with the parents.
- g. If the paramedics determine that the child does not require immediate medical attention, the possibility of a brief interview of the child should be considered. Once the child is taken to the hospital, it may be hours before the child is available to be interviewed and a critical investigative opportunity may be lost. The Operations Supervisor will determine if it is appropriate to conduct an interview and, if so, who will conduct the interview and where. Consideration shall be given to a location that allows for observation and recording as well as a suitable place for reunification with family members.

## Missing Persons Addendum II (continued)

- h. The brief interview with the child should concentrate on obtaining a description of the suspects and vehicles involved, as well as any locations that the child was taken. Comprehensive interviews of the child will be delayed until after the child has been seen by a doctor and reunited with the family. The Investigative Supervisor will determine if further investigative techniques are required.
  - i. As soon as the child is recovered, a meeting will be held with the following personnel in attendance to discuss the continuing investigation and what information will be released to the media.
    1. Incident Commander
    2. Assistant Incident Commander
    3. Operations Supervisor
    4. Search Team Leader
    5. Logistics Supervisor
    6. Assigned FBI Supervisor
    7. Public Information Officer
    8. Chief of Police
    9. Any additional staff as indicated by the Incident Commander
2. Child Recovered Deceased
    - a. As soon as the child's body is recovered, the Operation Supervisor should be notified by the personnel involved in recovering the body. The Operations Supervisor will then notify the Incident Commander who will determine which actions and notifications will occur next. These notifications will not be made on the police radio. All personal should remember that the public and news media are able to monitor police radio transmissions and that they may overhear information about the recovery and attempt to go to the recovery location or the child's residence.
    - b. As soon as practical after the child's body is recovered, the Operations Supervisor shall assign two sworn personnel and a victim advocate to contact the child's parents and notify them that the child's body has been recovered.
    - c. The Investigation Supervisor should arrange for two patrol officers to respond to the child's residence so they can offer any assistance that is necessary.
    - d. As soon as practical after the child's body is recovered, a meeting will be held with the following personnel in attendance to discuss the continuing investigation and what information will be released to the media.
      1. Incident Commander
      2. Assistant Incident Commander
      3. Operations Supervisor
      4. Search Team Leader
      5. Logistics Supervisor
      6. Assigned FBI Supervisor
      7. Public Information Officer
      8. Chief of Police
      9. Any additional staff as indicated by the Incident Commander

## Missing Persons Addendum II (continued)

### 3. No Recovery Is Made

- a. If neither the child nor their body is recovered within the first seven days following the child's abduction, a meeting will be held to discuss the appropriate future levels of investigative and search activities that will be conducted and what information will be released to the media. This meeting will again take place periodically until the 30<sup>th</sup> day following the abduction. At this point, the Captain of Detectives will make a decision with respect to the level of commitment of manpower and resources that will continue to focus on this investigation.

### 4. Suspect Arrest

- a. As soon as a suspect is arrested, the personnel making the arrest will notify the Operations Supervisor. The Operations Supervisor will be responsible for making the appropriate notifications and determining when the suspect will be transported to the jail.
- b. The Investigative Supervisor is the only person who can authorize the interview of the suspect. **Under no circumstances should anyone attempt to interview, or read rights to the suspect without prior approval of the Investigative Supervisor.** Once the suspect is taken to the jail, he/she is only to be searched, booked, and placed in a cell.

# Child Abduction Protocol

## Incident Command Structure

