Considerations and Guidelines for Responding to

Children Missing from Foster Care

Materials from the New York Division of Criminal Justice Services, Miami Police Department, Miami-Dade Police Department, Orlando Police Department, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Florida Department of Children and Families and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement were incorporated in this document.
On any given day, there are more than 49,000 children in the care and/or custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Several thousand episodes of missing DCF children will be reported each year. Most disappearances do not involve kidnapping; most involve runaways. However, a runaway designation does not mean that they are safe. Children who runaway are often lured or manipulated into flight by sexual offenders or persons who will harm them.

A combination of no witnesses to a disappearance and a lack of information about a child’s missing episode often default to the category of “runaway” when in fact an abduction or foul play may have occurred. The security videotape showing the actual abduction of Carlie Brucia in Sarasota, Florida easily allowed sheriff deputies to categorize her case as abduction. What would she have been categorized if the video did not exist? Absent a video, how would your agency categorize similar case facts?

Regardless of the category associated with the disappearance of a child (i.e., runaway, familial abduction, non-familial abduction), the demands on law enforcement agencies are significant.

Missing foster children are defined as those who have either left care voluntarily (i.e., runaway) or involuntarily (i.e., abduction) and/or cannot be accounted for by the agency responsible for their care and placement (i.e., lost in care).

Runaway foster youth are often in unsafe situations, vulnerable to molestation and prostitution. Abducted foster children are often at serious risk of harm because they are in the care of parents or relatives who may have abused or neglected them, or in the hands of strangers. Children and youth who are “lost” in the system, that is, the presence or absence in care is unaccounted for by the custodial agency, also face great risk because the child welfare system is not monitoring their whereabouts and not regularly assessing their safety and well-being.

Due to this heightened risk of harm, every case of a child or youth missing from or lost in care should prompt the child welfare, law enforcement, and other legal and social service professionals involved with and responsible for the child or youth should closely collaborate to ensure that the child is located and returned to a safe situation as quickly as possible. Once recovered, DCF, in consult with law enforcement, guardian ad litem and other service professionals can see that the child receives the support and services necessary to meet unmet needs and to prevent future runaway or abduction episodes.

Child welfare systems need to account for the whereabouts and safety of every child or youth for whom they are responsible. Factors that contribute to poor monitoring may include inadequate policies, training, and supervision; lack of effective decision-making tools and safety assessment protocols; and poor tracking systems, along with high caseloads that limit the time available for visiting with families and documenting cases.

Likewise, law enforcement agencies must be prepared to take appropriate investigative action whenever a child is reported missing by a child welfare provider.
Real Case Scenarios

Law enforcement is confronted with the below real case scenarios daily. Response protocols vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. This exemplifies the need to have policies in place for each scenario.

The Department of Children and Families have a child in their court-mandated care; during which the child is placed by the court, with the parent, pending further evaluation. The parent absconds with the child. What action would your agency take?

If it is determined that the child’s life is in danger, the law enforcement agency at a minimum should assist in locating the child to determine his/her welfare, whether or not a missing child report is filed. Note: A child can be under the supervision of a child welfare agency, but not physically in their custody. A child may be placed with one parent, while the child welfare agency investigates neglect or abuse complaint against the other parent. Too often, both parents will abscond with a child to prevent any further legal action against the abusing parent. It is these cases where the child ends up being further abused or killed.

Who can report a child as missing?

Anyone responsible for the care or custody of a child, including the child welfare agency, should be able to report a child as missing. The law enforcement agency may need to verify who has actual custody to determine if the child is truly missing or with a custodial person.

The Department of Children and Families reports that a teenager ran away from a shelter possibly with her an adult male. The child is believed to be in another state. What actions would your agency take?

Before a child is removed from NCIC, law enforcement should determine if there are any court orders or NCIC entries mandating where the child should be returned. A forensic interview of the child should be conducted by law enforcement to determine if the child was victimized by the adult companion. In Florida and some other states, the Department of Juvenile Justice (or their equivalent) has procedures in place to return out-of-state runaways to their home states. Check with the Department of Juvenile Justice to coordinate the return of the child to his/her home state.

A child, who had been sheltered in a foster facility and who has been reported missing by DCF, has been located in another state living with a relative. What action would your agency take?

A missing child should never be removed from NCIC until a visual verification has been made of his/her location by child welfare or law enforcement. The verification should always be documented in writing by the locating entity and made part of the law enforcement investigative file. Law enforcement should determine if the relative is authorized to have custody or has the relative violated any statutes such as Interference with Custody, Harboring a Runaway, Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution, etc. Generally, the child welfare agency is responsible for traveling to the child’s location and escorting him or her to the proper placement. As noted above, the Department of Juvenile Justice may be able to assist in returning the child home.
A child who has been reported as missing to your agency subsequently reaches the age of emancipation. The child welfare agency closes their case as statutorily they no longer have jurisdiction. What policies are in place to ensure that your agency does not close their case until the child, now turned adult, has been located and determined to be safe?

Law enforcement agencies should have policy mandating that all cases of missing children remain open and active until law enforcement can document that the child, now turned adult, is alive. Searching driver’s license, department of labor, public assistance or other state databases are a good source of information when attempting to locate these persons. Unfortunately, there are thousands of unidentified juvenile remains in morgues. Newer technologies, such as DNA, can be applied and have in some jurisdictions resolved short and long-term disappearances.

Children who have left a caregiver, regardless of reasons, often become dependent upon risky behavior for survival. For example, they are manipulated or coerced by exploiters to engage in illicit activity, such as sale of illicit drugs, engaging in prostitution or theft.

Children may run to run “home” or to familiar surroundings, rather than running “away from home.” Ironically, as they run back to familiar surroundings, these are often the same environments which they were removed from neglect, abuse and dysfunctional relationships with their families.

With regard to parental abductions, cases have shown again and again that children who have been taken by a non-custodial parent can be in significant danger. Desperate people sometimes do desperate things, including bringing harm to their own children. Even as this publication was being developed, this notion was demonstrated by a case from western New York State.

A one-year old child and her older brother were placed in foster care by Social Services, after she had been severely beaten on at least two occasions. In addition to other injuries, her skull had been fractured twice. While in the custody of the foster family, the biological father and mother orchestrated a plan to abduct the children. They hired a prostitute to pose as a social services case worker and during supervised visitation, succeeded in fooling the foster family and abducted both children. Unfortunately, after a diligent search by social services, the investigating police agency, the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse and NCMEC, the abducted parents managed to flee to Puerto Rico. About forty-five days after the abduction, the child was beaten to death by her father.

Unfortunately, these types of cases occur more frequently than one might imagine. Even if harm is not brought to a child abducted from foster case, it is likely that life “on the run” with the abducting parent is unstable. Children frequently live with an altered name, appearance and lifestyle, experience physical or medical neglect, experience unstable schooling, experience frequent moves or even homelessness and/or are told lies about the left-behind parent.

Unfortunately, children removed from dangerous home settings can become lost while in government care. Perhaps the most well known case is that of Rilya Wilson, who four was when she disappeared in 2001. Rilya vanished from foster care in the State of Florida and despite national media coverage of the incident her whereabouts still remain a mystery. According to the foster guardian, in January 2001 a woman appeared at her home and explained that she was taking Rilya for a “psychiatric examination.” The woman indicated that she was a Social Services representative and seemed to know details about Rilya and her situation. Rilya never returned and has not been seen or heard from since. Obviously, other factors came into play contributing to Rilya being unaccounted for more than a year. Caseworkers failed her, caretakers failed her and the child welfare system failed her.
Children missing from foster care are certainly at risk. Complicating matters, unlike a family-reported missing child case, foster children often do not have a loved one with a vested interest in the child’s return working with law enforcement to facilitate a quick and safe return.

One point that cannot be over-emphasized is that regardless of the reasons behind a disappearance, law enforcement agencies are statutorily and ethically responsible for taking appropriate investigative action when a child goes missing.

Statutory Requirements

Several Federal and state statutes prescribe legal requirements with respect to the handling of missing child cases by law enforcement agencies.

The Missing Children Act of 1982 (28 USC § 534) mandates that regardless of category or circumstances, each missing child reported to federal, state or local law enforcement must be immediately entered into state and National Crime Information Center (NCIC) missing person, even if an abductor has not been charged with a crime.

The National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990 (42 USC §§ 5779 and 5780) mandates that regardless of category or circumstances, waiting periods before taking a missing child report, including family-abduction cases, are prohibited. It also requires immediate entry of information into the NCIC Missing Person File and close liaison with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children on missing child cases.

Jurisdiction

Across the state, police departments and sheriff’s offices have a variety of policies for accepting reports from DCF. In some jurisdictions the law enforcement agency will not accept cases if a child ran from a shelter, they instead refer DCF to the jurisdiction of the child’s home. The standard for law enforcement should be the report will be taken in the jurisdiction where the child disappeared. It is important that law enforcement officers in both the jurisdiction where a child was last seen and the jurisdiction where the child last resided collaborate during the subsequent investigation. Also, nothing precludes transfer of primary responsibility for an investigation, if warranted by information revealed during the investigation.

“Anyone can report a car missing anywhere; often the same doesn’t hold true for missing children. Everyone has a duty to report; everyone has a duty to take a report.”

Kenneth Buniak, Director – NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services - Missing and Exploited Children
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>751.02</td>
<td>Determination of Temporary Custody Proceedings Jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>787.03</td>
<td>Interference with Custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>937.021.</td>
<td>Missing Child Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>751.03.</td>
<td>Petition for Temporary Child Custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.536</td>
<td>Recognition of Out of State Custody Decrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.528</td>
<td>Registry of O/O State Custody Decrees &amp; Proc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.516</td>
<td>Modification of Custody Decree from Another State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>985.211</td>
<td>Releasing or Delivery from Custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>787.04</td>
<td>Removing Minors from State or Concealing Minors Contrary to State Agency or Court Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>984.085</td>
<td>Sheltering Unmarried Minors; Aiding Unmarried Minor Runaways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.401</td>
<td>Taking a Child Alleged to Be Dependent into Custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>914.22</td>
<td>Tampering with a Witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>984.15</td>
<td>Taking a Child into Protective Custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 61</td>
<td>Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 744</td>
<td>Guardianship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>316.6135</td>
<td>Leaving Children Unattended or Unsupervised in a Motor Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>984.13</td>
<td>Taking into Custody a Child Alleged to Be from a Family in Need of Services or to Be a Child in Need of Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.201</td>
<td>Mandatory Reports of Child Abuse, Abandonment, or Neglect; Mandatory Reports of Death; Central Abuse Hotline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>810.097</td>
<td>Trespass Upon Grounds of Facilities of Public Schools</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
There are many legal precedents that highlight the duty of law enforcement to provide appropriate and adequate services to citizens. The failure of an agency to identify training needs and to set policy for matters which are foreseeable can create liability. Failure to appropriately handle a case pursuant to relevant statutes or generally accepted practices can create liability. Failure to act reasonably and/or in a timely manner can create liability.

Law enforcement and child welfare share mutual liability and responsibility when a child is reported as “missing from care.” Unfortunately, it is evident that many cases are still not being reported, investigated and entered into NCIC.

Judgments against law enforcement agencies have been awarded to left behind parents or custodial family members when officers failed to accept missing child reports or improperly handled incidents by not reading court/custody documents properly, not advising vested parties correctly or arresting/detaining people improperly.

Deficiencies in the reporting, investigative, recovery or intervention processes by either law enforcement or DCF may go unnoticed; unless the child falls victim to foul play. Civil liability may surface and it may be very difficult to defend actions or lack of actions in a court of law. Resulting financial judgments against involved agencies can be significant.

It is a crime in all states to interfere with the custody of a child. A child who has been abducted by a parent or other family member is at risk. With the advent of Amber Alerts there have been many well publicized cases where a family member abducted and killed his or her children.

Be familiar with your local procedures for taking a child into custody and or recognizing court orders issued outside of your county or out of state. Most out of state court orders require “domestication”.

It is incumbent on law enforcement agencies to investigate family abductions. Law enforcement officers who have advised a left behind parent that the child’s disappearance is a “civil matter” have been sued and penalized by the courts. Courts have held that law enforcement is responsible to make certain that the child is with the person who has lawful custody and must verify the validity of any court orders.

Children who are abducted by family members may face great risks. These children came into the care of DCF because the child was in significant danger in the home. If all efforts to locate the child fail, caseworkers will petition the courts to dismiss DCF’s supervision of the child. DCF caseworker may close their case and advise law enforcement that the case is closed but fail to state that the child has never been located. When this happens
the child is still at risk, is still missing and the law enforcement agency may be the only entity responsible for recovering the child.

**Children Under Child Welfare Supervision But Not In Care**

Children who are under the supervision of the child welfare agency but are not in their care present unique problems to law enforcement. An example would be that a judge orders the child welfare agency to supervise the child’s welfare but allows the child to reside with his parent. Often times when the parent absconds with the child law enforcement will decline to file a missing child report unless a warrant has been issued for the absconding parent or there is a “take into custody” order for the child. The child may be at risk but absent a court order the parent may in fact have custodial rights to the child. If it is determined that the child’s life is in danger, at a minimum law enforcement should assist DCF in locating the child to determine his/her well being.

**Review Current Procedures**

Conducting a review of agency policies and procedures can be an eye-opening experience. If none exist, it is imperative that they are developed, implemented and understood by all staff members.

- Key points to consider in evaluating current procedures:
  - An officer is dispatched on **all** missing child reports.
  - Each report is checked for proper teletype entry and/or removal.
  - The person reporting the case is contacted for initial case follow-up.
  - The person reporting the case is provided case updates.
  - When available, photographs are obtained and incorporated in missing child alerts or media releases.
  - On all abduction and foul play missing child cases, the FDLE Missing Children Information Clearinghouse is contacted.
  - Officers are knowledgeable in federal and state statutes laws pertaining to family abduction, Interference with Custody, Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution (UFAP) warrants, the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act, the Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act, and other laws governing missing children and crimes against children investigations.
  - Dental records of all children missing for more than 30 days are entered into NCIC.
  - Recovery/return of each missing child is confirmed by sight and documented in writing.
Reports of runaways or parental abductions are investigated and handled according to federal and state statutes.

Once located, runaways are forensically interviewed to determine if additional criminal spin-off investigations are warranted when abuse is reported.

The caseworker is notified about pertinent information concerning sub-standard living conditions or abuse for follow-up by the child welfare agency.

Each recovered/returned missing child is immediately removed from NCIC.

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**Law Enforcement and DCF Response**

Agreements that clearly delineate the distinct and shared responsibilities of law enforcement personnel and the child welfare staff improves efficient use of personnel and other resources. Consider establishing:

- Contact lists with the names and telephone numbers of key contact individuals from law enforcement, child welfare and other involved agencies.
- A case management system that will serve the needs of both agencies.
- Liaison to the FDLE Missing Children Information Clearinghouse which can provide analytical and investigative assistance, and other services to include mobilization of the Child Abduction Response Teams.
- Staffing sessions to review and triage cases.
- Standardized leads tracking forms.
- System to communicate case updates between DCF and law enforcement.
- Joint training sessions
- Develop a process and the forms necessary for interviewing each child who has returned from a missing episode.
- Provisions to pursue criminal charges with prosecutors, when warranted by case facts.
- Public Information Plan
- Procedures for requesting AMBER or Missing Child Alerts. *(See Appendix A).*
- Procedures to incorporate image in FCIC *(See Appendix C).*

Incorporated in this document is the Missing Person Checklist developed by the Miami Police Department. An investigative guide like this can assist in insuring all necessary resources are utilized when searching for a missing child. Please see below.
RESPONSE CHECK LIST GUIDE

(Incident Action Plan Flowchart)

First Responding Officer:  IBM #:  Unit #:  Radio Channel #:  

Time of disappearance:  Time the report was called-in:  1st Officer’s arrival time:  

- Obtain preliminary information from the person reporting:
  - Ascertain who has legal custody of missing child / who is the case worker of elderly person:
  - Request and examine court orders, verify status through a records check, Court Clerk, FDCF:
  - Identify the PLIC (Person Last In Contact) with the child / elder:
  - Identify the PLS (Place Last Seen) and secure it:
  - Conduct a thorough check of the location (prevent contamination of the scene):
  - Classify the missing person:
  - If the missing person meets the Departmental Orders Endangerment Criteria, notify your supervisor and contact a missing persons’ investigator: Note: THE CANINE BLOODHOUND RESCUE TEAM should be notified as soon as possible.
  - Complete the RF 210 FORM before the Incident Report (the form contains the following information):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Person Reporting:</th>
<th>Relationship:</th>
<th>D.O.B:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missing Person’s Information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Race/Sex:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>D.O.B:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Height:</td>
<td>Weight:</td>
<td>Hair Color:</td>
<td>Eyes Color:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasses:</td>
<td>Clothing:</td>
<td>Shoes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoos:</td>
<td>Piercing:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scars:</td>
<td>Photo:</td>
<td>Video:</td>
<td>Location missing from (Place Last Seen):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name:</th>
<th>Address:</th>
<th>Phone #:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Name</td>
<td>Grade:</td>
<td>After school activities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Record / Date last attended / Behavior:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Fax, E-Mail or Call the RF 210 FORM to the CIS Desk (24 Hours Desk) Immediately:
- Issue the B.O.L.O. county-wide:
- Call the CIS Desk (24 Hours Desk) to verify receipt of the RF 210 form and to request immediate entry into NCIC / FCIC:
LEAD INVESTIGATOR

- Time of notification to Investigator:
- Contact and debrief the first responding officer at the scene:
- Ensure the B.O.L.O. has been aired county-wide. Obtain B.O.L.O number and update it if necessary:
- Ensure the missing person’s information has been entered correctly into NCIC/FCIC (check printout):
- **ACTIVATE THE CANINE BLOODHOUND RESCUE TEAM.** (call the K-9 Supervisor and if the team is not available, call the Department of Corrections K-9 Team): REFER TO THE GRID SEARCH GUIDE*
- Request an ID Unit to respond: Name: ID Number:
  - Thoroughly check the residence (including the closets, attics, laundry room, cabinets, and under/behind/inside furniture:
  - Evaluate contents and appearance of home and child’s room:
  - Secure the child’s room as a crime scene:
  - Inspect hairbrush, diary and book bag, items with the child’s fingerprints, bed sheets, used clothes, and shoes for evidence. Also, request parents to extract information from the computer and recorded media.
  - Impounded Items: Property Receipt Number:
- Assign Officer/Interpreter to the family: Assign Spokesperson/Liaison with the media:
- Prepare & e-mail the flyer to the Public Information Office: REFER TO THE FLYER’S “HOW TO” PROGRAM*
- Print flyers for personnel involved in the grid search and give them instructions on what to look for:
- Prepare the mapping of the grid search area: REFER TO “HOW TO” STEPS PRESENTATION*
- Coordinate the grid search with the Patrol Supervisor and the Canine Bloodhound Rescue Team. Determine POA (probability of area)* and POD (probability of detection)*. Check canals, bridges, alleys, dumpsters, yards, abandoned cars, condemned buildings, railroad right-of-way property, parks, empty lots, car dealership lots, construction sites, etc: REFER TO THE GRID SEARCH GUIDE*
- Special care needs to be taken to protect the grid search scene from contamination.
- When organizing search groups, keep the number to a maximum of five with an assigned officer.
- Ensure that everyone at the scene is identified, documented, and interviewed separately: (Use ICS form**)
- Check with family members, relatives, and friends - when was the last time they’ve seen the missing person? Ask each one, “What do you think happened to the child?” (Use ICS form**)
- Inform the State Attorney’s Office. Request the “Justice in Motion” Mobile Office to conduct the interviews.
- Call hospitals, clinics, the JAC, jails, INS Office, Medical Examiner, Rapid Transit Bus, Metro-Rail, etc. REFER TO THE EMERGENCY CONTACTS DATABASE*
• Determine if there are suspicious persons (from interviews, grid search, and previous reports in C.A.R.E.):
• Determine if a suspicious vehicle has been seen in the area (from interviews, grid search, and C.A.R.E.):
• **ACTIVATE “A CHILD IS MISSING INC” PHONE ALERT PROGRAM: FOR STEPS CLICK HERE**
• Evaluate the **ACTIVATION OF THE AMBER ALERT**: Contact FDLE 1-888-356-4774:
• Prepare the “Locater” Poster for the Law Enforcement Network:
• Evaluate requesting assistance from FDLE and the National Center For Missing And Exploited Children:
• Post flyers on the missing persons bulletin boards located at the Miami Police Stations:
• Activate the flyer distribution program to area supermarkets by Frito-Lay (e-mail flyer):
• Post flyers at designated Web Sites:
• Obtain a current list of sexual predators living in the area: **PLOT ON GRID SEARCH MAP**
• Conduct registered sexual predators’ home checks:
• **ACTIVATE THE FBI-RAPID START / FDLE-LEADS DATABASE ANALYST TEAM**
• Contact the victim’s advocate for assistance with counseling, re-unification, and as a family monitor to alert the investigator about unusual comments, phone calls, or strange behaviors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctor’s Name:</th>
<th>Address:</th>
<th>Phone #:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dentist’s Name:</td>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>Phone #:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS DROP-DOWN LISTS:**

- Child Sleeping Habits:  
- Child Study Habits:
- Child Playing And Entertainment Habits:  
- After-School And Sport Activities:
- Parents Behavior Style:  
- Who Visits The Home?  
- Who Takes Care Of The Child?

*Included in the components CD

**ICS Form: Urban Interview Log** (included in the BASARC forms and instructions folder in the components CD)

**DEFINITIONS:**

POA: **PROBABILITY OF AREA**: POA- the probability that a subject is contained within an area, including the assigned grid search area and the areas not being searched.

POD: **PROBABILITY OF DETECTION**: POD- the probability that a clue might have been seen or detected, given the application of a search resource (dogs, spaced search, helicopter, etc).

PLIC: **PERSON LAST IN CONTACT**: PLIC is the person who was last talking, accompanying, supervising, and watching the missing person.

PLS: **PLACE LAST SEEN**: PLS is determined from the person last in contact with the missing person (PLIC).
THESE GRAPHS REPRESENT A STATISTICAL STUDY (W. G. SYROTUCK’S ANALYSIS OF LOST PERSON BEHAVIOR) SHOWING THE % OF LOCATED MISSING PERSONS IN RELATION TO THE PLACE LAST SEEN (1, 2, 3, MILES AND BEYOND).
To obtain a firm understanding of existing background dynamics and sufficient biographical information to act when a child runs or is abducted from out-of-home care, use of a comprehensive intake form by DCF is crucial.

It is also important to ensure that there is an understanding in place for child welfare staff to immediately make information available to investigating law enforcement officers. Any steps taken by DCF to locate the child should be communicated to law enforcement. The existence or the intention to obtain custody orders, pick-up orders, and termination of parental rights should be divulged to the investigating law enforcement officer.

At a minimum, child welfare agencies should be strongly encouraged to document the following on a standardized intake form.

- Child’s full name, aliases and nicknames.
- Child’s gender and race.
- Child’s height and weight.
- Child’s hair and eye color.
- Child’s previous addresses.
- Child’s age and date of birth.
- Child’s place of birth.
- Child’s physical characteristics, including detailed descriptions of scars, marks, tattoos (and locations).
- Child’s Social Security Number.
- Child’s e-mail addresses and cellular telephone number (if applicable.)
- Names and contact information for both biological parents and/or guardians (including the biological mother’s maiden name.)
- Names and contact information for siblings, other relatives, romantic interests and friends.
- Name and location of the school attended or last school attended (including grade.)
- Medical information (including medical conditions, medications used, doctors visited, anomalies, deformities, and previous fractures.)
- Description of interests, hobbies, places frequented and places of interest.
- Existence of court orders or other custody orders.
- Names and contact information for all involved child welfare representatives.
- Prior placements and residences (include those residences prior to state custody.)

The immediate availability of a recent photograph of the child is also extremely important when a law enforcement agency is asked to take action in a missing child case.

During the DCF intake process each child is fingerprinted. It is recommended that law enforcement obtain a copy of the fingerprints for submission to the Automated Fingerprint Index System via the FDLE Missing Children Information Clearinghouse when the child goes missing.
Risk Assessment

In addition to utilizing standardized forms and reports, law enforcement agencies should encourage child welfare entities to adopt and consistently use a “risk assessment tool” during intake. This is crucial, as it will assist in determining flight and abduction risk and related preventative measures. Law enforcement agencies should use the same tool when commencing their missing child investigation.

Risk assessment should involve consideration of many factors, including those listed in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RISK FACTORS - MISSING FROM CARE</th>
<th>FAMILY ABDUCTION - DOES THE PARENT...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Runaways - Does the child...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family Abduction - Does the parent...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Have a history of running away?</td>
<td>1. Threaten abduction (or has there been a prior incidence of abduction)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Demonstrate a desire to run?</td>
<td>2. Have ties to the area or have family/social support in another community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Demonstrate independence, including an ability to survive on the streets?</td>
<td>3. Have a history of mental health issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Demonstrate limited social skills and/or peer relationships?</td>
<td>4. Feel alienated from the legal system?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Have weak bonds with siblings?</td>
<td>5. A history of child abuse/neglect?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Have a history of out-of-home placements?</td>
<td>7. Suspect/believe that abuse has occurred?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fall between the ages of 13 to 18?</td>
<td>8. Provide a stable home/family environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Have a record of school absences</td>
<td>9. Accept relevant court orders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Have significant emotional issues?</td>
<td>10. Have a history of unlawful behavior and/or arrests?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Abuse alcohol/other substances?</td>
<td>11. Exhibit a desire to retaliate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Have an unstable family/home environment?</td>
<td>12. Have a history if short-term employment or unemployment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Seem to accept placement/custody?</td>
<td>13. Have other children to care for at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Have a history of juvenile referrals and/or arrests?</td>
<td>14. Have a stable relationship with the other parent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Reported abuse or other victimization?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emancipation

The Department of Children and Families statutorily, in most instances, does not have jurisdiction of children once they have reached the age of 18. Following a child’s emancipation, DCF will close their case on missing “emancipated” children.
However, they may or may not notify the investigating law enforcement agency. In some instances, the DCF caseworker notifies law enforcement that the case is closed, but fails to disclose that the child was never recovered. In those instances where a child reaches the age of emancipation, the DCF staff should make available their case files to law enforcement until such time law enforcement locates the child, who is now an adult. Some law enforcement agencies close their investigations once the child welfare agency closes their case. Child welfare agencies statutorily do not have jurisdiction over children who reach the age of emancipation.

Without specific and correct lines of communications and policies, the law enforcement agency may remove the child from the NCIC missing person database; eliminating the possibility for identification of the child, if found at a later time. The law enforcement agency of jurisdiction should keep the case active and the child entered into NCIC, until the location and safety of the child, now turned adult, is determined. Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to utilize “linked records” whenever possible. Weeks and miles away a law enforcement officer that comes in contact with a suspicious person, will more likely run a query on the adult rather than a child, therefore the two must be linked in order to facilitate recoveries. See Information Memorandum 2002-23 and Sample Link on linking NCIC/FCIC entries.

**DNA and Fingerprints**

Florida and some other states allow for the submission of DNA or secondary DNA standards to be entered into state and/or federal DNA databases. These are then searched against unidentified remains or other missing person indexes. In addition to these searches Florida allows for the DNA to be searched against incoming arrests and crime scene DNA submissions.

Also, inclusion of a child’s fingerprints into the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) allows at a minimum for the child’s prints to be searched against unidentified remains and missing person indexes. In Florida, fingerprints can also be searched against incoming arrest fingerprints and crime scene latent prints.

DNA and fingerprints have resolved cases of children who have gone missing and would otherwise be entered as unidentified.

Law enforcement agencies should consider reviewing old, unsolved cases utilizing DNA technologies. Although the child’s DNA may not be available, parents or sibling DNA might be easily obtainable. An example of how this can resolve disappearances involves a 1976 case, which was closed after the mother’s DNA was submitted to the CODIS. The subsequent search in 2004 against unidentified remains positively identified an unidentified deceased child as the missing child thereby answering that one fateful question for the family.

Please see: [FDLE MCIC/AFIS Database Missing Persons Fingerprint Project](http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MCICAFIS/html/MissingPersonsFingerprinting.html)  
[Florida's Missing Persons DNA Database](http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MCICAFIS/html/MissingPersonsDNA.html)
Factorial Analysis Crime Threat Solutions (FACTS) is a Windows based application created to allow a user to easily query multiple data sources. From publicly available data to unique government data, it all is available within this one application. The data sources that can be queried include Person Search, Florida Driver License, Motor Vehicle, Phone Lookup, Corporation, Mapping Option, Florida Corrections, Line-up Creation Screen, and Florida Criminal History.

Special capabilities that law enforcement has never been able to do quickly before have been included in FACTS. Users are able to do "wild card" queries in a geographic area for the smallest bits of data an investigator might have for a vehicle. Getting a list of vehicles back from the query, the user can then display all of the vehicles owners’ driver license images. Taking this "wild card" query capability to its next logical step, a user can query for subjects with a unique type of criminal history and physical description, who have links to a known geographical area, and links to a known vehicle. With this query a user could query for a subject whose first name is Jeff and who was seen driving a white Ford truck with a partial license tag of AB in a particular area offering ice cream to children at a school. The system would then display all the subjects who "scored" in the query so that the user could bring up their driver license images or further analysis on them. Additionally, with the optional mapping software, FACTS software users have the ability to map multiple addresses to look for relationships between any queried items that have an address. These maps can be saved and or printed for additional uses. The FDLE Missing Children Information Clearinghouse analysts are able to conduct FACTS queries for law enforcement officers who are investigating missing children, abductions or abduction attempts.

Public Assistance Databases - Often law enforcement will be able to locate a missing foster child by having DCF search their public assistance records related to the parents. DCF can check with the Office of Economic Self Sufficiency, Medicaid and other units within DCF for information related to the child and the child’s family. These records and sources of information may provide leads as to family members who may be harboring the child or who may know the child’s whereabouts.

Post Recovery Investigation

With regard to abduction by a family member, follow-up interviews with the recovered child can facilitate pursuing a criminal case and preventing further events.

The same holds true for children who run away. Interviewing a returned runaway can further protect the child and possibly other children who are placed at the same shelter particularly if abuse or criminal acts against the children are reported by the returned runaway. While merely asking questions off a standardized form is not the
preferred method for interviewing and establishing a rapport with a child, a debriefing template can be used to insure key issues are discussed.

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONFIDENTIAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL RESPONSES ARE TO BE VOLUNTARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING JUVENILE DEBRIEFING REPORT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICKNAME/ALIAS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NAMES OF FRIENDS OR RELATIVES WITHIN THE AREA

1. WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY? WERE YOU ENCOURAGED TO RUN AWAY? BY WHOM?

2. WHERE DID YOU FIRST GO WHEN YOU RAN AWAY?

3. DID YOU RUN AWAY WITH ANOTHER JUVENILE OR WITH AN ADULT? YES______ NO ______ WITH WHOM?

4. DO YOU BELONG TO A GANG? YES______ NO ______ GANG NAME:

5. DO YOU PRACTICE IN THE OCCULT? YES______ No______ TYPE:

6. HAVE YOU BEEN PHYSICALLY ABUSED? YES______ NO______

7. HAVE YOU BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED? YES______ NO______

8. DO YOU HAVE A SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE? YES______ NO______ WHAT KIND?

9. ARE YOU HIV POSITIVE? YES______ NO______ IF YES, GIVE DETAILS

10. ARE YOU CURRENTLY UNDER A DOCTOR’S CARE? YES______ NO ______ FOR WHAT?

11. ARE YOU PREGNANT? YES______ NO______ HOW FAR ALONG? |
```
12. WHAT TYPES OF DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL HAVE YOU CONSUMED?

13. WHERE DID YOU STAY AFTER YOU RAN AWAY?

14. AFTER YOU RAN, DID ANYONE HELP YOU OBTAIN FOOD, SHELTER, ETC.? 
   YES____ NO_______  IF YES, WHOM?

15. DID YOU ATTEND SCHOOL AFTER YOU RAN AWAY?

16. ARE YOU PRESENTLY ATTENDING SCHOOL? YES_____ NO_____  
   IF NO, WHY ARE YOU NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL?

17. WERE YOU INVOLVED IN ANY TYPE OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AFTER YOU RAN AWAY?  YES____ NO _____

   WAS JUVENILE ADVISED OF MIRANDA?  YES_____ NO____
   IF YES, DESCRIBE UNDER COMMENTS SECTION, INCLUDING ADDITIONAL CASE NUMBER.

18. HAVE YOU EVER RUN AWAY BEFORE?  YES_____ NO_____
   IF YES, WHEN AND WHY?

19. WERE YOU THE VICTIM OF ANY TYPES OF CRIMES BEFORE YOU RAN AWAY?  YES______
   NO_______  IF YES, DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED.

20. ARE YOU WILLING TO SEEK COUNSELING?  YES_______ NO______

21. WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOUR PLACEMENT?

   COMMENTS:

   COMPLETE BY:                                             DATE               BADGE NUMBER

The majority (more than 90%) of missing children cases involve runaways, with many children being habitual or chronic runaways. Agencies that employ post runaway debriefing sessions with runaways have learned that a majority of runaways ran to a parent, friend or relative. Typically when a child is categorized as a runaway and law enforcement or the child welfare agency recovers the child, no further action is taken other than to return
the child to his or her residential facility or shelter. Agencies that have employed methods to ascertain what has caused a child to run have had success in accessing proper placement and thereby reducing the child’s desire to run in the future. The fact that a majority of runaway children run to a parent, friend or relative suggests that some of these children are not necessarily running away, but rather seeking to find their own alternative placements. When asked as to why they have repeatedly run away from shelters or foster homes, some children complained of poor or abusive living conditions. Many of the abuses reported fall within the jurisdiction of law enforcement, yet are solely investigated by DCF. These cases should be jointly investigated by both DCF and the police agency of jurisdiction. This information should be collated and acted upon when analysis reveals a particular shelter/home may be contributing to the children running away or there are indications of risk factors present in the home or shelter.

Who Searches for a Missing Foster Child?

Generally, a child who is missing from a “traditional home” has parents and family members who work with law enforcement in the search for the child, doing whatever it takes until the child is safely home. Unfortunately, the primary concerns with regard to a child missing from foster care may only be liability, accountability or media impact. Law enforcement may be the only responsible entity searching for the child, particularly if the child reaches the age of emancipation or the court rules that the child welfare agency no longer has jurisdiction of the child while he or she is missing.

Every missing child deserves to know someone is looking for them. Most missing children are runaways, but this is the one category that law enforcement dedicates the fewest, if any, resources. Yet we know that the runaways and throwaways are the children that have a significant socio-economic impact on society due to their repeated victimization, likelihood to engage in criminal activities (now and as adults) and dependence throughout their lives on welfare services. Addressing habitual runaways has proven to reduce crime, as well as, benefit the would be runner.

Limited manpower and constrained budgets are common issues confronting police agency administrators. Through the efforts of the Department of Justice, other federally funded programs, NCMEC, the Child Welfare League of America, State Missing Children Clearinghouses and others, there are significant resources and qualified individuals available to assist in the investigation and management of missing children cases.

Your response to runaways, abductions and children lost in the system may make all the difference in the lives of many children for years to come.
Appendix A

FLORIDA AMBER PLAN

Criteria For Activation

To activate the alert the following five (5) criteria must be met.

1. The child must be under 18 years of age.
2. There must be a clear indication of abduction.
3. The law enforcement agency's investigation must conclude that the child's life is in danger.
4. There must be a detailed description of child and/or abductor/vehicle to broadcast to the public (photo when available).
5. The activation must be recommended by the local law enforcement agency of jurisdiction.

Note: Not to be used for Runaway

Steps For Activation

- The Amber alert can only be activated by law enforcement.
- The local law enforcement agency will call the FDLE Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (MCIC) at 1-888-356-4774.
- The FDLE will work in conjunction with the local law enforcement agency of jurisdiction to determine if information is to be broadcast on a regional or statewide basis.
- The FDLE working in conjunction with the local law enforcement agency of jurisdiction will prepare information (i.e., child, suspect and/or vehicle, contact information) for public distribution.
- The FDLE will ensure that the information is broadcast through the Emergency Alert System, Dynamic Message Signs, lottery machines, http://www.missingchildrenalert.com, and other resources.

Make Use Of All Available Resources

- Local media outlets
- Local Crime Stoppers
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children 1-800-843-5678 (Florida Branch 1-561-848-1900)
- Jimmy Ryce Center for Victims of Predatory Abductions 1-800-JIM-RYCE (546-7923)
- Child Watch (Orlando) 1-800-928-2445
- A Child is Missing, Inc. 1-888-875-2246
- FBI National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime 1-800-634-4097

If you have any questions about the Florida Amber Plan, please contact the FDLE/MCIC at 1-888-356-4774 or http://www.fdle.state.fl.us
Appendix B

Analytical and Investigative Resources

Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Missing Children Information Clearinghouse 2331 Phillips Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32308
(850) 410-8585
Toll-free (888) 356-4774
www.fdle.state.fl.us
www.missingchildrenalert.com (sign up to receive Amber or Missing child alert notifications via email, cell phone, and text paging)

The Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (MCIC) provides analytical and investigative support in the processing of leads associated with missing children cases. MCIC staff will:

- Provide analytical and investigative assistance to law enforcement agencies
- Assist law enforcement agencies in developing leads and coordinating multiple agency follow-up
- Provide assistance for out-of-state, Interpol and Hague Country missing children cases
- Conduct private and public database searches
- Flag birth and school records
- Administer AMBER and missing child alerts
- Facilitate DNA submissions of missing children or their relatives to state and/or national databases
- Facilitate fingerprint submissions of missing children to AFIS
- Provide training to criminal justice partners, medical and social service professionals
- Serve as liaison to Florida’s Child Abduction Response Teams
- Publishes and distributes emergency fliers containing names, photographs, and descriptions of missing children
- Serve as a liaison to other state missing children clearinghouses
- Serve as a liaison to the Florida Computer Crime Center when a computer is involved in missing child cases
- Assist with Off-line FCIC searches
The following steps are taken in using ACIM's Missing Program:

A person calls the police department to report a missing child, elderly or disabled person.

The police department then calls A Child Is Missing on a toll-free number.

A Child Is Missing also requests a cell or beeper number to reach the officer on the scene for additional information.

ACIM then makes a recorded message with the information that has been supplied.

The location last seen is entered into the computer and a database of phone numbers of the residents/businesses is gathered. The message is then sent out to the community.

When a child is reported missing near water, the immediate area is canvassed with the message, then the search area is expanded if the child has not been found.

ACIM continues to work with the officer on the scene and/or the communications department until the missing person has been found.

Florida Network of Youth and Family Services
2728 Pablo Avenue
Tallahassee, Florida 32309
(850) 922-4324
www.floridanetwork.org

The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services is a private, not-for-profit association of 24 community-based agencies. These agencies operate 32 youth crisis shelters and more than 150 sites for child and family counseling throughout Florida. Every judicial circuit has at least one Network service provider.

The Network provides round-the-clock crisis counseling and shelter for runaway, unгovernable, homeless, troubled and/or habitually truant children (ages 10-17) and their families. Chapter 984, F.S. defines and mandates services to Children in Need of Services (CINS) and Families in Need of Services (FINS); and Chapter 228.041, F.S., establishes services to habitually truant children. The Florida Network and its 24 agencies are the primary providers of CINS/FINS services through a single contract with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).

The CINS/FINS continuum of services is designed to divert children from entry into the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and to maximize the strengths of youth and family systems. The Florida Network supports the missions of three state agencies:
1. **Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ):** The Network helps reduce juvenile crime by serving homeless, runaway, truant and ungovernable children who have multiple risk factors that frequently lead to crime.

2. **Department of Children & Families (DCF):** The Network protects the most vulnerable by strengthening families at risk of child abuse and neglect and by providing crisis services and safe havens to troubled children.

3. **Department of Education (DOE):** The Network supports student achievement and accountability by working with families to improve the school attendance of habitually truant children and by carrying out court orders for Children in Need of Services.

Essential strategies for supporting these missions include:

- Targeting resources to high risk children, families, schools and communities
- Maintaining children in their own homes when it is safe to do so
- Returning children to their own homes after shelter placement when it is safe to do so
- Providing the opportunities and support that all young people need to build upon their strengths and interests, be safe and healthy, finish their educations, and become productive, happy and law-abiding adults
- Stabilizing and strengthening families through collaborative planning, services and links to other community supports
- Working collaboratively at the local level with all partners

**National Runaway Switchboard**
1-800-621-4000 24 Hour Hot Line
www.nrscrisisline.org

The National Runaway Switchboard operates a hot-line for teens to call when on the run. They facilitate relationships that ensure that youth and families have access to resources in their communities; which includes child advocacy, runaway prevention training, teenage bulletin board, education and solution-focused intervention, non-sectarian and non judgmental support.

**Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**
Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse
1-800-851-3420
www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provide national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs and to improve the juvenile justice system so that it protects public safety, holds offenders accountable, and provides treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the needs of juveniles and their families.

**National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)**
Charles B. Wang International Children’s Building
699 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3175
The NCMEC is law enforcement's direct link to many investigative services including case management, case enhancement, information analysis, imagery and identification service, age progression and regression, photo distribution, web site postings, Project ALERT, Team ADAM, child advocacy, state clearinghouse liaisons.
As you may already know, the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) is a nationwide, online computer/telecommunications system maintained by the FBI. The system makes millions of records including files on wanted, missing, and unidentified persons instantly available to local, state, and federal criminal-justice agencies throughout the United States and Canada.

Inquiries and replies, available around the clock, every day of the year, are provided to authorized agencies through the use of an identifying NCIC-ORI number. Established in 1967, NCIC has since created a number of specialized information files and data retrieval programs that are of significant benefit to the law-enforcement officer. When investigating cases of missing or abducted children, officers will find the three NCIC resources listed below, along with the Wanted Person File (WPF), to be especially useful.

- Missing Person File (MPF)
- Unidentified Person File (UPF)
- Off-Line Search Procedure

The Missing Person File

Created in 1975, the NCIC Missing Person File is an automated database system that stores descriptive information about a missing person using a specific set of identifying factors. Since the Missing Person File is divided into 5 individual classifications, it is extremely important for the reporting officer to accurately assess each case and designate the proper category.

While certain, basic identifying information such as name, date of birth, sex, race, height, weight, and hair color are required for the original Missing Person File entry, NCIC has included many additional descriptive entry fields that can significantly enhance the likelihood of recovery or case resolution. With the assistance of parents and other caregivers, investigators can obtain specific information about the child’s physical and medical characteristics as well as a complete description of jewelry worn and personal property carried. While most of these fields can be group searched for specific comparisons about the child, investigators should note that information entered in the miscellaneous information section, including comments about a possible endangering companion, is not compatible with group search and will only be revealed if the specific entry is queried.

The Unidentified Person File

The Unidentified Person File was established by NCIC in 1983 to facilitate the identification of unknown deceased persons and living persons whose identity could not be positively ascertained.
Law enforcement officers and coroners who encounter such situations are able to use the Unidentified Person File reporting system to enter a complete description of the unknown body or individual using much the same entry format as the Missing Person File. Then, each night, NCIC cross-references one file against the other and determines those unidentified persons who significantly match descriptions of individuals reported as missing. When such a match takes place, NCIC immediately notifies both agencies through their ORI numbers. Current and proposed enhancements in this file will greatly aid law enforcement in this identification process including the addition of a mechanism to compile all descriptive information on deceased, unidentified cases in NCIC and the utilization of mitochondrial deoxyribonucleic acid (mtDNA) analysis.

Essential to the success of both the Missing and Unidentified Person Files is the entry of complete, up-to-date dental records. Since, in many cases, dental comparisons may be the only means to identify a recovered body, investigators should collect and enter complete records as an integral segment of their investigation.

To facilitate the gathering of these records NCIC and some state repositories have develop standardized data collection guides (i.e., missing person data collection guide; unidentified person data collection guide). Copies of these booklets are available through NCIC State Control Terminal Agencies or directly from NCIC at 304-625-4995.

The Off-Line Search

While most law enforcement officers are familiar with how NCIC files can be searched for timely and accurate information in the common “online” method, few are aware of the investigative benefit that can be found by using the “off-line” search format.

An example of how NCIC’s off-line search capability was instrumental in solving a case can be found in its use by a Phoenix, Arizona detective investigating the abduction of a small boy by his non-custodial mother. Since the mother left driving a car registered in Arizona, the description of the car and license plates was immediately entered into both the NCIC Missing (child) and Wanted (mother) Person Files. After months went by with little in the way of leads, the detective learned that the suspect’s father, living in Florida, had been listed with the Arizona Department of Motor Vehicles as a co-owner of the vehicle just a few weeks before the abduction. After finding that the father had then registered the car in Florida, and may have mailed the new plates to the suspect, the detective decided to run an NCIC Off-Line Search using the Florida plates as the subject. Within a few days the detective was informed that the same car, with Florida plates, was the subject of a routine NCIC stolen vehicle inquiry by an officer in Houston, Texas, just one month after the abduction. The Houston officer was contacted and remembered not only where the inquiry was made, but also knew that the car was still in a local motel complex. As a result, the child was recovered and the suspect arrested and returned to Arizona.

In brief, the Off-Line Search is a special technique that can be used by investigators in a number of circumstances to obtain NCIC information not normally retrievable in the usual, online manner. Missing child investigators may wish to review active cases to evaluate the suitability of using this valuable investigative technique. Assistance about Off-Line Searches can be obtained by calling NCIC at 304-625-2000 or FCIC 1-800-292-3242.

NCIC Criteria

A missing person record may be entered into the National Crime Information Center databases for a person who meets any of the following criteria:
1. **Disabled**: A person of any age who is missing and under proven physical / mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting himself / herself or others to personal and immediate danger.

2. **Endangered**: A person of any age who is missing and/or in the company of another person under circumstances indicating his / her physical safety may be in danger.

3. **Involuntary**: A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance may not have been voluntary (Abduction/kidnapping).

4. **Juvenile**: A person under the age of eighteen (18) who is missing and does not meet any of the criteria as set forth in 1, 2, 3, or 5.

5. **Catastrophe Victim**: A person of any age who is missing after presumed or known catastrophe.

6. **Other**: A person over the age of 21 not meeting the criteria for entry in any other category who is missing and for whom there is a reasonable concern for his / her safety.

### Caution Indicators & Medical Conditions

NCIC also allows for “caution indicators” and “medical conditions” to be entered into the message key which will aid inquiring officers. This is where the reporting officer can indicate any of the following:

- Armed and dangerous
- Explosives Expertise
- Sexually Violent Predator
- Allergies
- Medication Required
- Violent Tendencies
- Known to Abuse Drugs
- Heart Condition
- Epilepsy
- Hemophiliac
- Martial Arts expert
- Escape Risk
- Alcoholic
- Suicidal Risk
- Diabetic

When the Missing Person (MNP) is a child and they are also the victim of a Child Abduction (CA) these two codes, when entered into the NCIC database, will automatically trigger the FBI’s National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) and Strategic Information Center (SICOC), and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) a notification of urgent cases and enable them to provide immediate assistance.

NCIC requires that agencies entering a juvenile have “signed documentation that the child is un-emancipated” this usually take the form of a signed police report. The National Child Search Assistance Act also mandates that law enforcement agencies make entry into the NCIC system “without observance of any waiting period.”

Unless otherwise removed or located, NCIC records will be retained in the data file for an indefinite period of time until removed by the originating agency for Unidentified Person’s File entries and Missing Person File entries. It is essential that entered records are regularly confirmed through your agency’s validations process.

### Linking NCIC Hot Files

The NCIC 2000 system also allows for the linking of files in state and national hot files. This process is accomplished by first entering the adult record using the Enter Wanted Person Message Key (EW) or the enter Missing Endangered Person Message Key (EME). Be sure to include as much information as possible (vehicle, license, child’s image, information on the missing child). Next, enter the juvenile using the Enter Missing Juvenile Endangered Message Key (EMJE). Again, be sure to include as much information on the juvenile as well as the abducting adult. Once these files have been entered they should be linked to each other. When a field inquiry includes a linked record, the national (NCIC) response will return the linked records to the original query record. The record will be highlighted with ***RELATED RECORDS***. Moreover, if a law enforcement officer queries an entered vehicle in NCIC and the response indicates the vehicle is stolen, there
will also be a link to the missing child which would indicate to the officer that a passenger in the vehicle might be an abducted or missing child.

**Dual Entries-Missing and Wanted**

In December 2002, the national policy for NCIC entry was modified to allow for the dual entry of a missing juvenile as both *missing* and *wanted* if the child is both wanted for a criminal offense and is missing.

**Entering Images in FCIC**

To enter an image in the FCIC system you must first enter the record to get the records PCN number.
- Go to FEIM message key
- Fill in PCN, Image Type, and Image Date fields
- Click the “Add Image” button next to the Image File field
Locate the image, select it and click open
The image must be a .jpg file in order for it to be accepted by the system

Click Submit and the image is now attached to the record.
Make a notation of the Florida Image Number (FIN) for your records.

Entering Images in NCIC

To enter an image in the NCIC system you must first enter the record to get the records NIC number.
Go to EIM message key
Fill in NIC Number, Image Type, and Image Date fields
Click the “Add Image” button next to the Image File field
Locate the image, select it and click open.

The image must be a .jpg file in order for it to be accepted by the system.

Click Submit and the image is now attached to the record.
Make a notation of the Image NCIC Number (IMN) for your records.