

## 5: RESPONSE TO REPORTS OF MISSING AND ENDANGERED CHILDREN

### Section 5.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and response to, and investigation of; all reports of missing and endangered children as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, subd. 1, (c), and (e). (“Minnesota Missing Children Program”). The mandatory procedures are highlighted in bold print.

This policy addresses only those investigations where the missing child has been determined to be both missing and endangered.

### Section 5.02 POLICY

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

After this law enforcement agency has received a report of a missing child, obtained the basic facts of the case, descriptions of the missing child and abductor (if known), and determined that there is sufficient evidence to believe that the child is endangered, the agency will respond according to the following five types of general procedures:

- a. Initial Responses;
- b. Initial Investigation;
- c. Investigation;
- d. Prolonged Investigation
- e. Recover/Case Closure.

The facts surrounding each missing and endangered child report will dictate when the procedures are warranted, and what the order and priority would be within each of the five categories.

However, each of the procedures must be carried out immediately as circumstances warrant and many of the steps will need to be done simultaneously.

### Section 5.03 DEFINITIONS

- A. Missing – According to the Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, subd. 1, (c), missing means “the status of a child after a law enforcement agency that has received a report of a missing child has conducted a preliminary investigation and determined that the child cannot be located.”
- B. Endangered – According to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, subd. 1, (e), endangered means that “a law enforcement official has received sufficient evidence that the child is with a person who presents a threat of immediate physical injury to the child or physical or sexual abuse of the child”.
- C. Child – According to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, subd. 2, (2), child means “any person under the age of 18 years or any person certified or known to be mentally incompetent.”
- D. Sufficient Evidence – means articulable facts and circumstances which would induce a reasonable prudent police or peace officer to believe that a crime has been or is about to be committed.

E. NCIC- means the National Crime Information Center.

F. CJIS - means the Criminal Justice Information System.

## Section 5.04 PROCEDURES

### A. Initial Response Procedures

- a. Dispatch a peace officer to the scene to conduct a preliminary investigation.
- b. Obtain interpretive services if necessary.
- c. Interview parents(s)/person(s) who made the initial report.
- d. Determine when, where, and by whom the missing child was last seen.
- e. Interview the individuals who last had contact with the child.
- f. Obtain a detailed description of the missing child, abductor, vehicles, etc.
- g. Load the NCIC Missing Person File (involuntary category) with complete descriptive and critical information regarding the missing and endangered child.
- h. Load the NCIC system with the complete descriptive information regarding suspect(s).
- i. Request the investigative and supervisory assistance.
- j. Update additional responding personnel.
- k. Broadcast known details on police communication channels to other patrol units, other local law enforcement agencies, and surrounding law enforcement agencies if necessary, use the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications Systems (NLETS) and the Minnesota Crime Alert Network to alert state, regional, and federal law enforcement agencies.
- l. Notify the family of the crime victim services available and give the family the Crime Victim Services card.
- m. Seal the crime scene, do not allow individuals to leave the area until after interviewed, and note anyone who may have left just prior to the arrival of law enforcement.
- n. Activate protocols for working with the media.
- o. As required by Minnesota Statute, Chapter 299C.53, Subd. 1, contact the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension regarding the incident. Request assistance as necessary.
- p. Implement multi-jurisdictional coordination/mutual aid plan as necessary, for example:
  - When the primary agency has limited resources;
  - When the investigation crossed jurisdictional lines;
  - When jurisdictions have pre-established task forces or investigative teams.

### B. Initial Investigation

- a. Conduct a neighborhood/vehicle canvass.
- b. Arrange for use of helpful media coverage.
- c. Maintain records of telephone communications/messages.
- d. Ensure that everyone at the scene is identified and interviewed separately.
- e. Search the home or building where the incident took place and conduct a search including all surrounding areas. Obtain consent of a search warrant, if necessary.
- f. Assign a trained and/or experienced investigator whose duties will include coordination of the investigation.

## C. Investigation

- a. Begin setting up the Command Post/Operation Base away from the child's residence: Know the specific responsibilities of the Command Post Supervisor, Media Specialist, Search Coordinator, Investigative Coordinator, Communication Officer, Support Unit Coordinator, and two liaison peace officers (one at command post, one at victim's residence). The role of the liaison at the home will include facilitating support and advocacy for the family.
- b. Establish the ability to "trap and trace" all incoming calls. Consider setting up a separate telephone line or cellular telephone for agency use.
- c. Compile a list of known sex offenders in the region.
- d. In case of infant abduction, investigate claims of home births made in the area.
- e. Obtain child protective agency records for reports of abuse on child.
- f. Review records for previous incidents related to missing child and prior police activity in the area including prowlers, indecent exposure, attempted abductions, etc.
- g. Obtain the child's medical and dental records.
- h. Update the NCIC missing person file with any additional information regarding the child or suspect if necessary.
- i. Interview delivery personnel, employees of gas, water, electric, and cable companies, taxi drivers, post office personnel, sanitation workers, etc.
- j. Contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) for photo dissemination and other case assistance.
- k. Determine if outside help is necessary and utilize local and state resources related to specialized investigative needs, including:

- Crime Victim Advocates
- Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- County Attorney
- Customs Investigative Services
- Minnesota State Patrol
- Minnesota Crime Alert Network
- Investigative experts in the areas of sexual assault, child maltreatment, and/or homicide
- Searches:

1. Ground Searches – Manpower, vehicles, and/or mounted patrols
2. Canine assisted
3. Water and underwater searches, and
4. Air searches

- Investigative Resources:

1. Child Interviewing
2. Polygraph
3. Profiling/Behavioral Analysis
4. MN Sex and Violent Crime Analysis programs
5. Crime Analysis/Computer Assistance
6. Forensic Artistry/Crime Scene and Evidence Processing
7. Memory Retrieval

- Interpretive Services
- The Department of Natural Resources

- Telephone Services (tarps, traces, etc.) and
- Media Assistance (local and national)

#### D. Prolonged Investigation

- a. Develop a profile on the possible abductor.
- b. Consider the use of polygraph for parents and other key individuals.
- c. Reread all reports and transcripts of the interviews, revisit the crime scene, review all photographs and videotapes, re-interview key individuals and reexamine all physical evidence collected.
- d. Review all potential witness/suspect information obtained in the initial investigation and consider background checks on anyone identified in the investigation.
- e. Develop timeline and other visual exhibits.
- f. Critique results of the on-going investigation with appropriate investigative resources.
- g. Arrange for periodic media coverage.
- h. Utilize rewards and crime-stoppers programs.
- i. Update NCIC Missing Person File information as necessary.
- j. Recontact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (CMEC) for age progression assistance.

#### E. Recovery/Case Closure

- a. Arrange for a comprehensive physical examination of the victim.
- b. Conduct a careful interview of the child, document the results of the interview, and involve all appropriate agencies.
- c. Refer family for effective reunification assistance.
- d. Cancel alarms and remove case from NCIC and other information systems, and remove posters and other publication from circulation.
- e. Perform constructive post-cast critique. Reassess the procedures used and update the department's policy and procedure as appropriate.