

234. MISSING AND ENDANGERED CHILDREN



RICHFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY

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Authority: Chief Jay Henthorne

NOTE: This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to establish guidelines and responsibilities for the consistent investigation of reports of missing and/or endangered children.

II. POLICY

This agency recognizes the need for immediate and consistent response to reports of missing and endangered children. Decisions made and actions taken during the preliminary investigation stages have a profound effect on the outcome of the case.

When this agency receives a report of a missing child it will immediately be investigated by the responding officers. If the initial investigation indicates the child has been abducted or may in any way be endangered, the duty supervisor and an investigator **shall** be contacted to assist in the investigation and search for the missing child.

III. DEFINITIONS

MISSING: According to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, sub. 1, (c) -- 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.

ENDANGERED: According to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 299C.52, sub.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.

IV. PROCEDURE

Upon receiving a report of a missing child, an officer or officers shall immediately be dispatched to the scene to conduct a preliminary investigation in accordance with the Policy #228 "Criminal Investigations: Operations."

In cases of missing children, the preliminary investigation **shall** include gathering a detailed description of the missing child, abductor, vehicle(s) involved, possible destinations, etc. After gathering the information, the complete descriptive information, as well as other critical information regarding the missing and endangered child, **shall** be entered in the NCIC Missing Person File (Involuntary Category). Any descriptive information regarding the suspect **shall** also be entered in the NCIC system. Entry in the NCIC system **shall** be done within two (2) hours of the initial reporting of the incident. The information should also be provided to surrounding police agencies via radio or telephone communications, the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications Systems (teletypes) or FAX network.

Investigative and supervisory assistance **shall** be requested as soon as it is determined the child is missing and endangered. The case investigator has the responsibility to contact the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension in accordance with Minnesota Statute, Chapter 299c.53 sub. 1. This contact

with the BCA **shall** be made within the first two (2) hours of the investigation to advise the BCA of the investigation. Request for assistance from the BCA or other agencies will be made by the Chief of Police or designee. If a multi-jurisdictional task force is formed to investigate the missing and endangered child case, the task force will be coordinated following the Policy #228 "Criminal Investigations: Operations."

Specific investigative steps to perform when investigating a missing and endangered child include:

- 1) Conducting a neighborhood canvas.
- 2) Maintaining records of telephone communications and messages.
- 3) Identifying and interviewing separately all persons at the scene.
- 4) Searching the home or building where incident took place as well as surrounding areas. Obtain consent or a search warrant as necessary.
- 5) Establishing "trap and trace" on all incoming calls to scene and family's home(s).
- 6) Compiling a list of known sex offenders in area.
- 7) Obtain child protection records of abuse or neglect on the child or other family members.
- 8) Reviewing Department records for prior contacts with the victim and family and other activity in the area of the incident.
- 9) Obtaining medical and dental records of child.
- 10) Request the activation of the Amber Alert System if the following two criteria are met:
 - a) The missing child is 17 years of age or younger and is abducted by a non-family member, and there is a reason to believe the victim is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.
 - b) There is information available to disseminate to the general public, which could assist in the safe recovery of the victim and or the apprehension of the suspect.
 - When the requirements are met and the decision to activate an alert has been made, we need to contact the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension/BCA to request activation of the Amber Plan. The BCA activates the MN Crime Network (MNCAN) and then works in conjunction with the Duty Officer from the Division of Emergency Management to activate the alert over the State Emergency Alert System.
- 11) Contacting the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for assistance in dissemination of fliers, posters, etc. locally and nationally.

Prolonged investigations may require the use of specialized investigative techniques, such as:

- 1) Obtaining a profile of possible abductor.
- 2) Using polygraph for family members, witnesses, suspects, or other key individuals.
- 3) Using criminal analyst for development of time-line and indexing of investigative data.

If the missing child remains missing 30 days after they are entered into NCIC, the local law enforcement agency will be contacted by the BCA Missing and Unidentified Persons Clearinghouse to request the following information (if not already received):

- 1) DNA samples from family members and, if possible, from the missing person;
- 2) Dental information and x-rays;
- 3) Additional photographs and video that may aid the investigation or identification;
- 4) Fingerprints;
- 5) Other specific identifying information.
- 6) This information will be entered into the appropriate databases by BCA Clearinghouse personnel.
- 7) If the child is still missing after 30 days, change the NCIC classification to "endangered".

At the conclusion of the investigation, a critique of the investigation should be conducted. The critique will be used to re-assess the procedures used and make revisions to the Policy as appropriate.

Found Children

If, after a reasonable period of time, the police cannot locate the home of a lost child and the parents have not called to report the child missing, officers should transport the child to St. Joseph's Home for Children located at 1121 E. 46th St. in Minneapolis.

Any child or children left alone in their home long enough to come to the attention of police or children left at school, daycare, or with a baby-sitter past the supposed return time of the parents might be considered abandoned. Officers must use their discretion based on maturity level, age, and length of time parents have been absent; and consider the totality of the circumstances in deciding what actions to take. If the children's parents or a responsible adult cannot be located, officers may transport the child or children to St. Joseph's Home for Children located at 1121 E. 46th St., Minneapolis, MN 55407.

By Order Of:



Chief of Police