



# CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



## Missing Child

Eff. Date 02/03/2020

### Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to establish guidelines and responsibilities regarding Madison Police Department's (MPD) response to reports of missing children.

The term "missing child" typically refers to a person who is younger than 18 years of age. However, federal law requires NCIC notification when a person between the ages of 18-21 is reported missing as well. Anyone under the age of 21, reported as missing shall be investigated accordingly and without delay.

MPD investigates all reports of missing children. Each case will be assessed to determine the risk to the child. In cases with an increased risk to the child, additional resources will be allocated as deemed appropriate for the specific details of the case.

Jurisdictional conflicts are to be avoided when a child is reported missing. If a missing child either resides in, or was last seen in this jurisdiction, this agency will immediately initiate the required reporting process. If a child 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 child report, this agency will assume reporting responsibility and work cooperatively with other agencies.

Questions concerning parental custody occasionally arise in relation to missing child reports. MPD officers shall accept the report of a missing child even if custody has not been formally established. Reporting parties will be encouraged to obtain legal custody as soon as possible; however, since the safety of the missing child(ren) is paramount, members of this agency will open a case when it can be shown the child has been removed, without explanation, from his or her usual place of residence. If the court has not established custody, then the law enforcement responsibility is to ensure the child is safe.

### Procedure

#### DEFINITIONS

Missing child cases may fall into one of the below types:

- The **non-family abduction**, in which a child is taken by an unknown individual through force or persuasion, usually in furtherance of additional victimization.
- The **family abduction**, in which a non-custodial family member flees with a child, usually in direct violation of a court-ordered custody arrangement. These cases have proven to be fatal. The child should not be assumed to not be in danger simply because he/she is with a parent.
- The **runaway child**, most often a teenager, who leaves home voluntarily for a variety of reasons.
- The **lost or otherwise missing child**, who becomes separated from parents or caretakers under circumstances not indicating the likelihood of an abduction or voluntary absence. (e.g., cognitively/emotionally disabled, endangered due to medical condition).

As soon as it is verified that the child is missing, an immediate city-wide radio alert to all other patrol units and neighboring law enforcement agencies shall be made. The child shall be entered into NCIC by the primary responding officer, and this entry shall not exceed two hours from the time of original officer dispatch.

Each case represents a unique set of circumstances. It is important for initial responding officers to evaluate a multitude of factors that will help determine the level of risk or danger to a missing child.

## RISK FACTORS

Missing children cases that present risk factors indicating a heightened likelihood of danger to the child require an intensive response. The following risk factors or unusual circumstances that may be present include:

- Is out of the zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage or physical condition.
- Developmentally disabled, cognitively disabled or other mental or physiological impairment.
- Is drug dependent and the dependency is potentially life-threatening.
- Is in a life-threatening situation.
- Is absent in a manner inconsistent with established patterns of behavior and the deviation cannot be readily explained.
- Is involved in a situation causing a reasonable person to conclude the child should be considered at risk.
- Reasonable belief that they are with others who could endanger his or her welfare.

If it is determined that **risk factors** are involved in the report of a missing child, an expanded investigation will immediately commence, and the OIC shall be briefed on the situation.

The OIC shall initiate command notification protocols and consult with the Special Victims Unit Lieutenant for potential deployment of specialized resources. The Special Victims Unit Lieutenant will, in consultation with the Captain of the Investigative Services Bureau, determine if the Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART Team will be requested to mobilize.

The OIC may initiate the review protocol for an AMBER Alert by contacting the Wisconsin State Patrol's Traffic Management Center at **1-844-977-4357 (844-WSP-HELP)**.

## Initial Responding Patrol Officers

1. Respond promptly to the scene. Verify that the child is in fact missing by searching the scene; an upset/panicked parent can miss a child.
2. Air a city-wide radio alert to all other patrol units and all neighboring law enforcement agencies that there is a missing child. Provide physical descriptors, clothing description, and the last known location of the child. Request additional units respond to check the immediate area where the child was last seen.
3. Interview the parent(s) or person(s) who made the initial report.
4. Determine when, where, and by whom the missing child was last seen.
5. Interview the individual(s) who last had contact with the missing child.
6. Confirm the child's custody status.
7. Identify the child's zone of safety for his or her age, developmental stage, physical and mental state.
8. Brief street supervisor; make initial determination of the type of incident and determine if K9 response is needed.
9. Brief OIC.
10. Obtain a complete description of the missing child, including photographs (multiple images) and/or video as well as air the last known location.
11. If suspicious circumstances are identified, obtain suspect and vehicle description along with other pertinent information to locate the person.
12. Provide detailed descriptive information to Dane County 911 for broadcast updates.
13. Contact Dane County 911 to enter the child in the NCIC Missing Person File within two hours of the officer's initial dispatch time.
14. Identify and interview everyone at the scene.
15. Secure and safeguard the area (place last seen) as a potential crime scene.
16. Determine if the child has access to an online computer, cellular telephone or other device. Obtain relevant email, online names and passwords.

17. Written reports, original and supplements shall be completed as a priority report prior to the end of the tour. A report must be completed on all missing children even if the missing child returns a short time after they are reported as missing.
18. If missing/runaway child returns, the dispatched officer shall respond in person to verify that the missing child has indeed returned. After verification, the officer shall contact dispatch and cancel the missing status. The return/cancellation must be documented in a report.

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**Initial Responding Sergeant**

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1. Obtain a briefing from the responding officers and/or other agency personnel at the scene.
2. Ensure a search of home and place last seen has been conducted.
3. Ensure that K9 resources have been considered for the home and place last seen. For additional resources, contact the OIC to make the request to the K9 supervisor.
4. Notify the OIC to determine if additional personnel and resources are needed to assist in the investigation-such as SVU notification and/or CART activation.
5. Consult with OIC to determine if AMBER Alert is appropriate. See AMBER Alert Protocol at end of document.
6. Establish a field command post (should be an appropriate distance from the residence of the missing child).
7. Determine the size of the perimeter and canvass area.
8. Organize and coordinate the initial canvass/search efforts using a map/grid of the area. Identify potential search areas.
9. Document canvass and/or searched areas.
10. If any suspicious circumstances exist, designate a co-supervisor to supervise perimeter.
11. All persons leaving the inner perimeter should be contacted and identified. All vehicles attempting to leave the inner perimeter should be detained and searched for the missing child.
12. Assign an officer to document all parked vehicles within a reasonable area around the inner perimeter.
13. Conduct initial methodical hasty searches of last known location of child
14. Coordinate exchange of information with the non-scene Command Post that includes the canvass documents, canvass/searched areas, and maps.
15. Brief responding SVU or CART members and/or investigative resources.
16. Direct the staging of media for the District Commander or PIO.
17. Release the canvass/search operation to the designated Search Operations Coordinator.

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**Officer-In-Charge**

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1. Assess the need for additional resources, equipment, personnel and/or outside resources.
2. Notify District Command and the Special Victims Unit Lieutenant.
3. Ensure that the required NCIC entry has been made.
4. Include the Missing Child information to the OIC Daily Log in SharePoint for MPD-wide dissemination. This includes runaways.
5. Consider the use of Dane County Emergency Telephone Notification. Designate the geographic area to be notified, preferably bounded by streets or other known geographic landmarks.
6. Consider activation of the non AMBER Alert community notification and/or Wisconsin's AMBER Alert System. See AMBER Alert Protocol at end of document.
7. Contact PIO to facilitate media issues.

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**Special Victims Unit Lieutenant**

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1. Assess the need for additional resources, equipment, personnel and/or outside resources.
2. Consult with the Captain of the ISB to determine if the DOJ-DCI CART should be requested.
3. Contact SVU detectives and request they respond to the District Command Post.
4. Establish a command post at the appropriate MPD District Station.
5. Serve as the MPD liaison to the DOJ-DCI CART Commander.

6. Call in and coordinate additional investigative resources as needed.

**Investigative Services Captain**

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1. Determine if DOJ-DCI CART resources should be requested.
2. Contact the Director of the Special Operations Bureau of DCI and request CART mobilization by calling 608-266-1671.
3. Notify the Assistant Chief of Operations of CART mobilization.

Original SOP: 02/25/2015  
(Reviewed Only: 01/09/2017, 12/26/2017, 02/04/2022, 02/05/2024)  
(Revised: 02/03/2020)

## AMBER ALERT Law Enforcement Agency Request Form Fields

**THE FOLLOWING IS FOR REFERENCE USE ONLY**

**The Actual Request Form will be filled out ONLINE**

Law Enforcement Agency

Agency Phone # (PUBLIC/MEDIA)

Number of Children Missing

Child Name (First Middle Last)

Child Address (Not Publicized)

Child Age

Child DOB (Not Public)

Child Race

Child Sex

Child Height (feet)

Child Height (inches)

Child Weight (include lbs.)

Child Eye Color

Child Hair Color

Child Scars/Marks/Tattoos

Child Last Seen Wearing

Child Special Needs/Medical

Child Name (First Middle Last)

Child Address (Not Publicized)

Child Age

Child DOB (Not Public)

Child Race

Child Sex

Child Height (feet)

Child Height (inches)

Child Weight (include lbs.)

Child Eye Color

Child Scars/Marks/Tattoos

Child Last Seen Wearing

Child Special Needs/Medical

Missing from-City

Missing from-State

Date/Time Last Seen

Location Last Seen

Add'l Missing Children/if any: Child's Name, Age, Sex, Race, Height & Weight, Hair Color, Eye Color, last seen wearing, any additional information.

Number of Suspects

Suspt Name (First Middle Last)

Suspect Address (Not Public)

Suspect Age

Suspect DOB (Not Public)

Suspect Sex

Suspect Race

Suspect Height (feet)

Suspect Height (inches)

Suspect Weight (include lbs)

Suspect Eye Color

Suspect Hair Color

Suspect Facial Hair

Suspect Scars/Marks/Tattoos

Suspect Clothing Description

Suspect Addt'l Info

Addt'l Suspects/if any

Suspect Mode of Transportation

Possible Direction of Travel

Suspect Vehicle Year

Suspect Vehicle Color

Suspect Vehicle Make

Suspect Vehicle Model

Suspect Vehicle Type

Suspect Vehicle Plate State

Suspect Vehicle Plate Number

Sus Vehicle Stickers/Damage

Narrative of Events for Public

THE FOLLOWING IS LE SENSITIVE

LE Sensitive Info (if any)

Name of Requesting Officer

Officers Direct Phone Number

Officers Email Address

# **WISCONSIN AMBER ALERT**

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT PROTOCOL**

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES ARE REQUIRED FOR ALL WISCONSIN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES REQUESTING AN **AMBER ALERT ACTIVATION**.

AMBER ALERTS MUST BE REQUESTED BY THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY OF JURISDICTION.

- ☐ 1.) An investigating officer who has reason to believe a child is abducted will verify the details with the designated supervising officer on duty.
- ☐ 2.) A supervisor will determine if the criteria has been satisfied for Amber Alert activation:
  - a.) THE CHILD IS 17 YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER.
  - b.) THE CHILD IS IN DANGER OF SERIOUS BODILY HARM OR DEATH.
  - c.) THERE IS ENOUGH DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD, THE SUSPECT(S) AND/OR THE SUSPECT VEHICLE(S) TO BELIEVE AN IMMEDIATE BROADCAST ALERT WILL HELP LOCATE THE CHILD
- ☐ 3.) Child must be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database.
- ☐ 4.) If Amber Alert criteria have been satisfied, complete the following Amber Alert forms IMMEDIATELY:

#1 CHILD ABDUCTION EMERGENCY ALERT FORM

(This form requires the signature of the supervising officer on duty.)

#2 BROADCAST SCRIPT FORM

(The supervising officer will determine if the alert will be broadcast regionally, multi-regionally, statewide, and other states.)

**\* If your agency needs the Amber Alert forms, they can be located at the following places:**

- **REQUEST FORMS FROM DANE COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER**  
Telephone (608)267-3913
- **ALL FORMS LOCATED ON THE TIME SYSTEM**  
Dispatchers can access the forms on the Time System under "Administrative Messages"
- **WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WILENET WEBSITE AT [WWW.WILENET.ORG](http://WWW.WILENET.ORG)**

- ☐ 5.) TELEPHONE Dane County Public Safety Communications Center to request Amber Alert activation, and to verify the receipt of all faxes, emails and TTYs transmitted  
***Dane County Public Safety Communications Center***

**DUTY SUPERVISOR TELEPHONE: 608-267-3913**

- ☐ 6.) E-mail, fax or teletype Amber Alert forms to Dane County Public Safety Communication Center immediately.

***Dane County Public Safety Communication Center***

E-mail: [dane911@co.dane.wi.us](mailto:dane911@co.dane.wi.us)

Fax: 608-267-2535

ORI: WI0130007



- ☐ Send the following forms to Dane County Public Safety Communications Center:

#3 VICTIM FORM  
#4 SUSPECTS FORM  
#5 VEHICLE FORM

- ☐ 7.) **IMPORTANT:** E-mail a **photograph of the child, suspect, and/or suspect vehicle**, in JPEG (.jpg) format, to the Dane County Public Safety Communication Center at [dane911@co.dane.wi.us](mailto:dane911@co.dane.wi.us). (If photograph not available at this time, obtain one as soon as possible and e-mail it to the Dane County Public Safety Communications Center immediately.) The photos will be posted at the Amber Alert website [www.amberalertwisconsin.org](http://www.amberalertwisconsin.org) and the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children and Adults website [www.missingpersons.doj.wi.gov](http://www.missingpersons.doj.wi.gov).
- ☐ 8.) As time permits, and on a case by case bases law enforcement should try to obtain written parent/guardian consent to release the name and photograph of the abducted child on the appropriate Wisconsin Amber Alert form.
- CHILD PHOTO AND NAME RELEASE FORM (#6)
- ☐ 9.) All Amber Alert **UPDATES** and **DEACTIVATIONS** must be e-mailed, faxed or sent via teletype to Dane County Public Safety Communications Center.
- AMBER ALERT **UPDATE** FORM (#7)
  - AMBER ALERT **DEACTIVATION** FORM (#8)
- ☐ 10.) Additional steps to be taken by your agency:

These steps will assist the media and the public in providing leads and tips to your agency.

- Designate a 24-hour telephone number
  - Designate an e-mail address
  - Designate a fax number
  - Designate a media liaison who will coordinate information interviews and send out press releases
- ☐ 11.) Contact Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children for additional resources and services. The Clearinghouse staff and Special Agents from DCI will be assigned to provide your agency with technical, analytical, investigative assistance, and victim family support.

**Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing & Exploited Children Hotline: 608-266-1671**

- ☐ 12.) Contact the 24/7 FBI Number at **414-276-4684** to obtain additional resources and services.
- ☐ 13.) Contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) for additional resources and services.

**TELEPHONE: 1-800-THE-LOST  
(1-800-843-5678)**

- ☐ 14.) Retain a copy of all Amber Alert forms, faxes, teletypes, e-mails and pertinent case information as your agency will be invited to DOJ/DCI to attend an after action meeting with all Wisconsin Amber Alert stakeholders.

Every Amber Alert activation will be evaluated and reviewed with your agency and all Amber Alert stakeholders

### **Additional IMPORTANT Amber Alert Information:**

#### **Child Abduction Response Team (CART)**

The Wisconsin Department of Justice/Division of Criminal Investigation/Child Abduction Response Team (CART) protocol has been approved by Fox Valley Technical Amber Alert. Certification will take place in October 2014.

#### **TIME SYSTEM:**

Dane County Public Safety Communications Center will issue a regional, multi-regional or statewide administrative teletype message via the TIME System to notify law enforcement agencies regarding Amber Alert **activations, updates and cancellations.**

#### **WISCONSIN CRIME ALERT NETWORK BROADCAST:**

Wisconsin Department of Justice, Wisconsin Statewide Information Center will disseminate crime alert bulletins through faxes, e-mails and text messages to law enforcement, media, DOT message boards, Outdoor Advertising Association of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Lottery and all Amber Alert partners regarding Amber Alert **activations, updates and cancellations.**

#### **EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM (EAS) BROADCAST:**

Emergency Alert System (EAS) broadcast will be sent out every 30 minutes for the first two hours and once for the next three hours. **(A five hour activation period)**

#### **EXTENDING AMBER ALERT BROADCAST:**

Amber Alerts can be extended beyond the five-hour period by **telephoning** Wisconsin Department of Justice/Division of Criminal Investigation and request the DOJ/DCI Director to extend the Amber Alert activation timeframe.

#### **AMBER ALERT WEBSITE: [www.amberalertwisconsin.org](http://www.amberalertwisconsin.org).**

Dane County Communication Center will post Amber Alert Activation information to the Wisconsin Amber Alert Website. Your agency should be monitoring the Amber Alert website to ensure the posting of accurate information.

#### **HIGHWAY MESSAGE BOARD SIGNS:**

Dane County Public Safety Communications Center will contact the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to **activate/update/cancel electronic highway message board signs.**

#### **DIGITAL MESSAGE BOARD SIGNS:**

Outdoor Advertising Association of Wisconsin will activate/update/cancel message board signs.

#### **WISCONSIN LOTTERY:**

Disseminate Amber Alert Bulletins

#### **FACEBOOK:**

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children post on FACEBOOK

#### **WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS ( CELL PHONES/TEXT MESSAGES):**

AMBER Alerts are distributed to mobile phones through the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) program, operated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Mobile phone users with WEA-enabled devices receive the alerts at no cost to them when in the geographic area where an alert has been issued.

When an AMBER Alert is activated in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Department of Justice -- Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) notifies the Dane County Public Safety Communication Center, which sends the alert to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for secondary distribution, which includes the WEA program.

**IMPORTANT:** **Revisions/Updates** to Amber Alert procedures and forms can be accessed at the following sites:

- Dane County Communication Center (608)267-3913
- Time System - located under Administrative Messages
- Contact Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children  
608-266-1671
- WILENET [www.wilenet.org](http://www.wilenet.org)