



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



Missing Child

Eff. Date 02/25/2015

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, 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, the OIC shall be briefed on the situation.

The OIC shall initiate command notification protocols and consult with a member of the CART Command for potential deployment of specialized resources.

The OIC may initiate the review protocol for an AMBER Alert by contacting the Dane County Public Safety Communications Center.

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. Interview the parent(s) or person(s) who made the initial report.
3. Determine when, where, and by whom the missing child was last seen.
4. Interview the individual(s) who last had contact with the missing child.
5. Confirm the child's custody status.
6. Identify the child's zone of safety for his or her age, developmental stage, physical and mental state.
7. Brief street supervisor; make initial determination of the type of incident and determine if K9 response is needed.
8. Brief OIC.
9. Obtain a complete description of the missing child, including photographs (multiple images) and/or video as well as air the last known location.
10. If suspicious circumstances are identified, obtain suspect and vehicle description along with other pertinent information to locate the person.
11. Provide detailed descriptive information to Dane County 911 for broadcast updates.
12. Contact Dane County 911 to enter the child in the NCIC Missing Person File within two hours of the officer's initial dispatch time.
13. Identify and interview everyone at the scene.
14. Secure and safeguard the area (place last seen) as a potential crime scene.
15. Determine if the child has access to an online computer, cellular telephone or other device. Obtain relevant email, online names and passwords.
16. 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.
17. 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.

Initial Responding Sergeant

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 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 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

Officer-In-Charge

1. Assess the need for additional resources, equipment, personnel and/or outside resources.
2. Notify District Command and CART Commander(s).
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.

(Reviewed Only: 01/09/2017, 12/26/2017)

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 an 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 CLEARINGHOUSE FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN & ADULTS**
Telephone (800)THE-HOPE (800)843-4673
- **WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WILENET WEBSITE AT WWW.WILENET.ORG**

- 5.) TELEPHONE the 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

Fax: 608-267-2535

ORI: WI0130007

- AS TIME PERMITS, send the following forms to Dane County Public Safety Communications Center:

#3 VICTIM FORM

#4 SUSPECT 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. If your agency does not have the capability to e-mail photos, then contact another law enforcement agency in your area, local media, school, local library, or copy center for assistance. (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 and the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children and Adults website www.missingpersons.doj.wi.gov.

- 8.) As time permits, law enforcement should 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 the 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 the 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 and investigative assistance.

AMBER ALERT HOTLINE: 1-866-65AMBER
(Law Enforcement Only) 1-866-652-6237

Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing & Exploited Children Hotline: 1-800-THE-HOPE
1-800-843-4673

- 12.) Contact the 24/7 FBI Number at [414-276-4684](tel: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. The Amber Alert review committee may request this information. Every Amber Alert activation will be evaluated and reviewed by the committee.

Additional IMPORTANT Amber Alert Information:

TIME SYSTEM:

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

PREMIER GLOBAL SERVICES FAX/E-MAIL BROADCAST:

Dane County Public Safety Communications Center will contact the Premier Global Services Fax Broadcast Company, which will disseminate faxes and e-mails to law enforcement and the media regarding **activations, updates and cancellations** of all Amber Alerts.

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**)

Amber Alert WEBSITE: www.amberalertwisconsin.org.

Your agency should be checking the Amber Alert website to ensure the posting of accurate information.

HIGHWAY MESSAGE BOARD SIGNS:

Dane County Public Safety Communications Center will work with 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.

EXTENDING AMBER ALERT BROADCAST:

Amber Alerts can be extended beyond the five-hour period by **telephoning** Wisconsin Department of Justice/Division of Criminal Investigation Director that approved the Amber Alert activation.

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
- Contacting the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children
1-800-THE-HOPE (1-800-843-4673)
608-266-1671
- WILENET www.wilenet.org